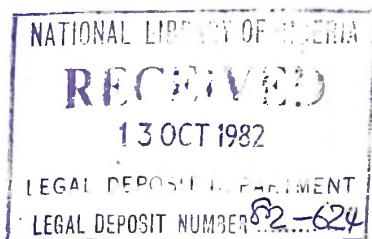






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# Groundwork of Nigerian History







# Groundwork of Nigerian History

*Edited by*  
**Obaro Ikime**

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## INTRODUCTION

With political independence, Nigerian history became a compulsory subject for all students of history in Nigerian universities. Those of us who taught the subject depended for source material on accounts written by travellers, missionaries and colonial administrators and a growing number of monographs by Nigerian and other scholars. We often found that the best way to proceed was to call on a team of experts on various aspects of Nigerian history—and the number of such experts was growing in each Nigerian University—to join hands in the teaching. This was because no single teacher thought he had the kind of breadth of knowledge needed to teach the entire subject by himself. It was obvious that one main reason for this state of affairs was the absence of a satisfactory text on the history of the diverse peoples of Nigeria. If the teachers got round the problem of the absence of an adequate text by getting various experts to teach their specializations, the students did not. As the number of works on Nigerian history grew each year, our students were faced with the problem of getting an overview of that history.

It was against this background that the Historical Society of Nigeria conceived of the idea of the *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. The aim was to provide a work of synthesis which would serve as a basic university textbook for university teachers and students, as well as an informative reference work for teachers in secondary schools and teacher training colleges, and all interested in Nigerian studies. Given the growing number of scholars working on the history of Nigeria, the Historical Society planned to bring out a book that would be as comprehensive in its coverage of the country, as it was scholarly and authoritative. To understand why the work as it now appears does not fully meet the Society's aim requires that we give a little history of the *Groundwork* itself.

It was clear from the very beginning that *Groundwork* had to be a collection of essays by experts on various aspects of Nigerian history. While it did not prove too difficult to identify who was to contribute what essay, we found, as is usually the case with such collaborative efforts, that the response was not uniformly enthusiastic. At a workshop held in Kano in December 1971 to discuss the papers that had been commissioned, it was not altogether surprising that there were a number of defaulters. The Society had to re-assign such papers as had not been written as at that date. This meant considerable delay. Our problems were compounded by the fact that just around that time a number of our colleagues were appointed to positions of responsibility in our university system as well as in government, with the result that one or two were unable to complete their assignments for the *Groundwork*. It took some four years after the Kano Workshop before the editors were able to go to press.

We went to press realising that the *Groundwork* is not as comprehensive in its coverage as the Society had planned. A number of chapters have remained unwritten'.

Thus there is no chapter on the Hausa States before 1800, despite repeated efforts to get one of the various authorities on the subject to produce it. We also failed to get a chapter on Cultural Developments which would have covered subjects like art, music, dance, architecture and the like. Our readers will notice a resuting imbalance as between political history on the one hand, and social and economic history on the other, though quite a few chapters which deal with political history have woven into them aspects of social and economic history.

The actual production of the *Groundwork* through the press has also built up quite a history of its own! We will not bore our readers with the details. It is enough to state that the Ibadan University Press that was to publish it ran into financial and other difficulties soon after it received the manuscript in 1975. This resulted in a further delay of more than three years before the Society decided to seek another publisher. Hence the *Groundwork* is coming out at a time when a revised version really ought to be in preparation, given the time lag since the 1971 Kano Workshop.

The editorship of this work also has quite a history! To begin with Dr. R.A. Adeleye of the University of Ibadan and Dr. S.O. Osoba of the University of Ife were appointed Editors. Then Dr. Adeleye left Ibadan to serve the Military Regime as Commissioner. Professor Obaro Ikime of the University of Ibadan then took his place and continued working with Dr. Osoba who later dropped out and was replaced by Dr. Kola Folayan also of the University of Ife. When Professor Obaro Ikime went on study leave in January 1975, Professor A.E. Afigbo, who had all along been a member of the Editorial Board, took over as one of the Editors. Professor Ikime returned from study leave to rejoin the team, while Dr. Kola Folayan left to serve as Commissioner in the Military Administration of Ondo State. It thus devolved on Professor Ikime to see the work through the final stages. It is only fair to put on record the valuable services of all those who have had a hand in editing this work. Having said that, it must be also clear that the changing personnel of the editorial team must also partly explain the delays, the failures to follow up correspondence to ensure return of manuscripts and the forwarding of much needed illustrative material.

The *Groundwork* is in four parts. The first part (Chapters 1 and 2) is a general discussion of the archaeological evidence as this relates to historical development in the Nigerian geographical area, and the influence of the geographical environment on Nigerian history. The rest of the work is divided into three sections—Nigeria Before 1800, Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century and Nigeria in the Twentieth Century. The approach has been chronological and 'regional'. Undoubtedly, other approaches are possible. However, given the state of knowledge in the 1960s when this work was planned, the approach adopted appeared then the most feasible. One consequence of this approach is that, inevitably, some ideas are repeated in various regional chapters.

On behalf of the Editors and the Society, I apologize to the authors for the long delay in publishing their material. To the readers also I apologize for the gaps and other shortcomings in this first edition of the *Groundwork*. These would surely be put right in future editions. Even with its inadequacies, we believe that it represents the most comprehensive work on Nigerian history yet to appear. We hope it will stimulate further research and encourage works of synthesis and interpretation by individual scholars.

It remains for me on behalf of the Society to thank all those who have stood by the Society all these years and have helped in various ways to make the publication of this

work possible. We thank the then Rector and Staff of Abdullahi Bayero College, Kano who generously hosted the Workshop in 1971; the authors who carried out their assignments, especially those who responded at short notice to fill gaps left by others; and various Governments for financial support to the project: the Federal Government ₦8,000, Bendel State ₦1,000, Kano State ₦2,000, and the then North-Eastern State ₦1,000. I must also thank the clerical staff of the History Departments of the Universities of Ibadan and Ife for bearing the heavy burden of typing at various stages of the production.

The last stages of the production of this book involved an extremely heavy burden of work on all concerned. The staff of Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Limited really did excel themselves at this stage. The Historical Society of Nigeria is extremely grateful to them for their effort. I had to draft some of my colleagues to assist with proof reading in order to meet the deadlines of the Publishers. I am grateful to all such colleagues for their willing co-operation.

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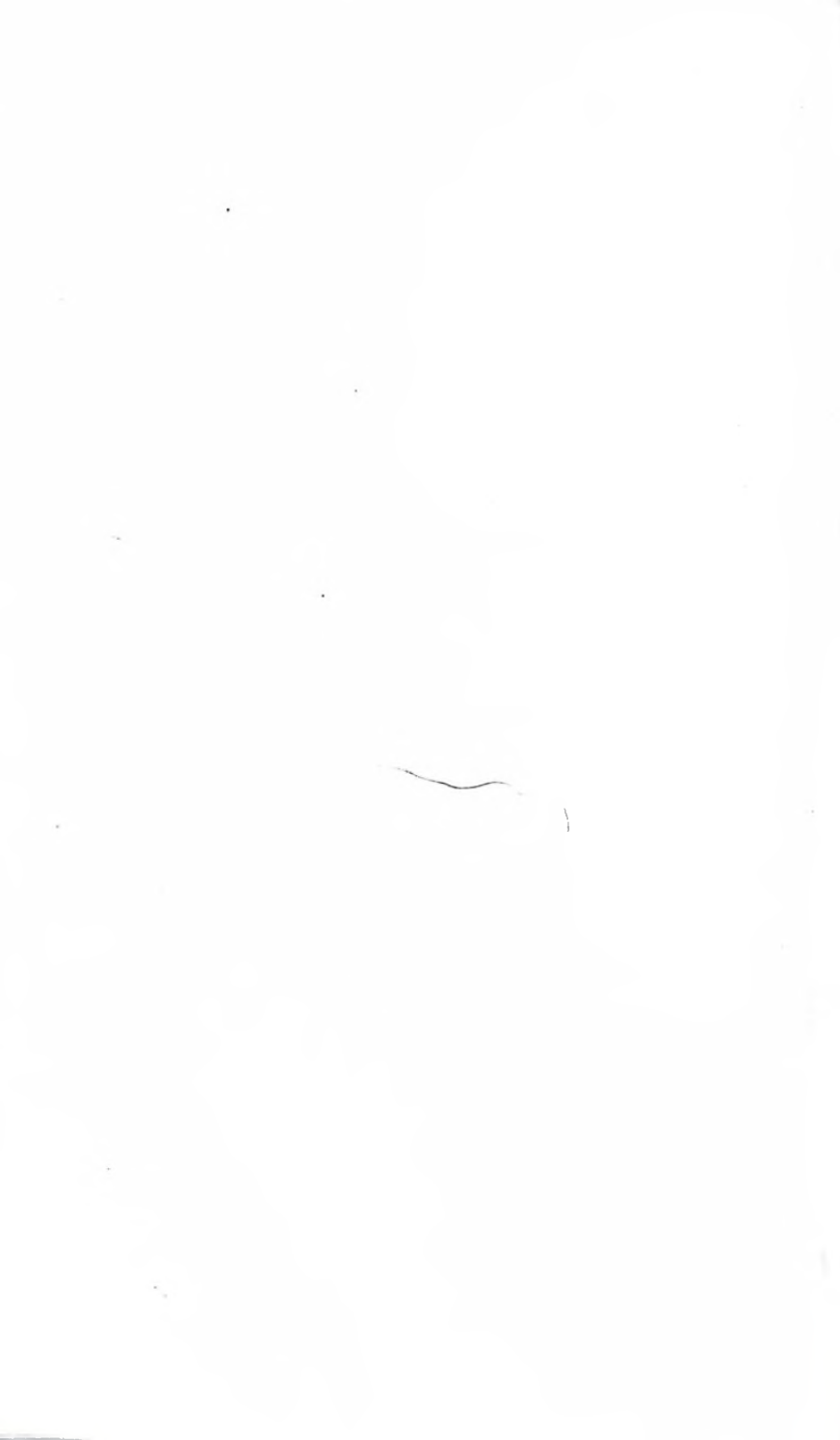
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**I**  
**Geographical & Archaeological**  
**Background**



## ENVIRONMENTS AND PEOPLES OF NIGERIA

### *A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria*

REUBEN K. UDO

The disastrous drought which affected the sahelian zone of Africa south of the Sahara in 1973 is now a historical fact. It occasioned large-scale migrations of people and livestock southwards, resulting in the dislocation of the economy and society of the affected areas. In Nigeria the situation has been largely contained, thanks to the generous aid provided by the Federal Government and private donors. A similar disaster in the pre-colonial period may have resulted in a forcible encroachment on the food resources of people further south by hunger-stricken sahelian refugees. Indeed, history is replete with wars and conquest by migrants fleeing from a desiccating environment to areas which are better endowed with food resources. The sahelian drought has confirmed that pre-industrial societies still live on the sufferance of an all-powerful nature which they have little power to modify or exploit. It underscores the great need to appreciate the part that geographical factors of location, climate and distribution of resources play in the making of history. In this introductory chapter we shall consider the relevance of the Nigerian environment to the interpretation of the course of human history in the country.

#### **The Land and the Climate**

Nigeria lies between latitudes 4°N and 14°N. It is bounded in the north by the Sahara Desert and in the south by the Gulf of Guinea, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean. The history of the country has featured many waves of human movements from across the Sahara, which has never been a complete barrier between the lands lying to the north and south of that great desert. In the course of these colonization type migrations, there have been displacement and intermingling of peoples, some groups have been pushed into new and often more difficult environments and the people, given the technology at their disposal, have had to adapt their ways of life to make the best use of their new environment. What natural routes have migrating peoples followed in Nigeria and what other aspects of the physical environment feature prominently in the process of settlement in the country?

It is hardly necessary to say that the economy of groups such as the Ijo of the Niger Delta has been closely related to and very much limited in scope by the conditions of their physical environment. In this vast low-lying region of swamps and innumerable waterways and creeks, the traditional economy has been largely limited to fishing and

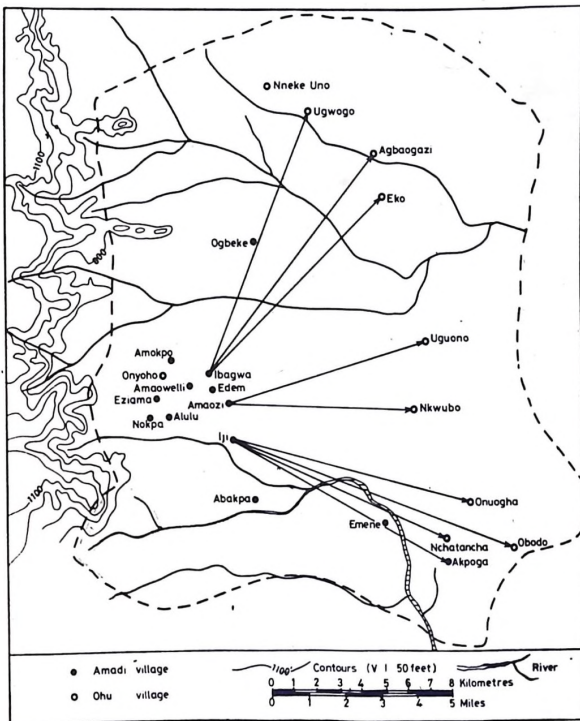
salt-making from sea water. Transportation has been largely restricted to the use of canoes and, lately, powered riverine boats. The main routes of early migrations as well as of trade followed navigable waterways which were not silted up. The Niger Delta has always been a region of difficulty which hardly attracts population, and its short-lived period of prosperity during the slave trade and later the palm oil trade was made possible by its geographical location, not as a result of the natural wealth of the area. The economic decline of the region followed the loss of its middleman position in the commerce between European traders and the hinterland people. The fact that the Niger enters the sea through these myriads of inter-connected creeks also delayed the commercial penetration of this part of the world. Today the Niger Delta which McGregor Laird described as having a soil too poor to produce a ton of palm oil is Nigeria's mineral oil-rich region. The difficult terrain which had limited its traditional economy to fishing and salt-making has, however, not changed, and it appears that the oil boom is not likely to bring about lasting changes in the economy and cultural landscape of this region.

Outside the Niger Delta and the coastal swamps and creeks, the Nigerian landmass consists essentially of a low plateau of about 600 metres (2,000 feet) above sea level. Except in the rugged range of hills along the Nigerian-Cameroun borders, there is no major physical barrier to the easy movement of people. Pre-colonial movements of population across the Cameroun-Adamawa ranges were very restricted, and both the people of Oron and the Ekoi groups of the Cross River basin, who claim to have come from the Camerouns, appear to have entered Nigeria from the sea and from the Cross River gap respectively. By contrast, the western and northern borderlands of Nigeria which consist of open plains have presented no obstacles to large-scale movements of people and armies. Rather, like the open spaces of Central Asia, these plains have permitted easy passage on foot and horseback. The ready movement of troops in such environments certainly assisted the prosecution of inter-group wars between the Abomeys of Dahomey and the Egba Yoruba of Nigeria as well as the numerous inter-group conflicts in the region of Lake Chad and the Niger-Niger borderlands. It is largely as a result of the absence of major physiographic barriers and the consequent ready spread of people that the political boundaries of Nigeria (as indeed of most African countries) have come to be regarded as 'artificial'.

Extensive plains dotted with numerous hills characterize the plateau surfaces of Nigeria. In most areas of the western and northern states where old hard rocks of the Basement Complex outcrop, the hills usually occur singly, but may also occur in groups as at Idanre and Oke-Iho in Ondo and Oyo States respectively. In the Ishan Plateau and the Udi-Nsukka Plateau, both of which were developed on sedimentary rocks, similar hill forms are common. The historical significance of these hills lies in the fact that in many areas like Idanre, Oke-Iho, Aku, Abuja, Igarra, Kabba, Okene and Mubi, they provided defensive outposts for refugees fleeing from more powerful invaders. Although many of these hill settlements were starved into submission after a long siege, many others were able to hold out against various invaders. Hence the survival of many hill settlements during the colonial period when some of them were forced to relocate on more accessible sites on the plains. The ability of many of the so-called pagan groups to resist the Fulani mounted warriors owed much to the protection offered by these natural defence outposts. In many localities, including the

Jos Plateau foothills, Nsukka and Adamawa, the slopes of these hills were terraced and intensively cultivated with food crops.

The use which the people of Nike made of the escarpment extending from Awgu through Enugu to Orokan in Idoma area as a defence device deserves mention in this section dealing with the physical landscape of Nigeria. The escarpment, which faces the Cross River plains is one of the most prominent landforms in Nigeria and in the Enugu area it rises abruptly like a wall for over 180 metres (600 feet) above the plains. At a period when local warfare was common, the people of Nike on whose territory Enugu is built, located their settlement quite close to the foot of the escarpment which served as a defence wall. Being themselves a warlike group, the Nike people ravaged the district east of the escarpment and acquired large territories which they had to defend. This they did by establishing picket villages settled by slaves at the periphery of Nike territory while the escarpment served as a natural defence wall in the west<sup>1</sup> (see Fig. 1).

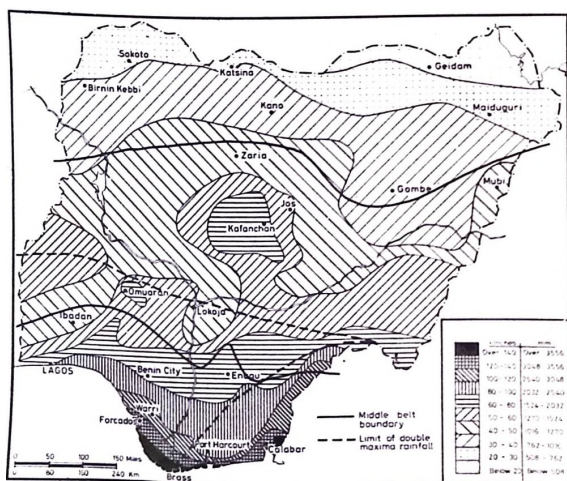


AMADI (freeborn) and OHU (slave) villages of NIKE

1. R. K. Udo, *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*, London, 1970.

In view of the open nature of the Nigerian landscape, particularly in the grassland areas of the north, it is not difficult to explain the absence of notable natural routes of human migrations in the country. Mountain passes and river valleys constitute natural routes, as distinct from roads which have been created by man. Movement between the peoples of the northern and western borderlands of Nigeria has been relatively easy and regular, largely because of the absence of physical barriers, but also mainly because the people inhabiting both sides of the colonial boundaries were often from the same ethnic groups. The role of cultural ties in the inter-territorial movement of peoples should be stressed at this point, since this is a major factor which explains a situation in which contacts and movements between the Hausa of Nigeria and Niger may be greater than contacts between Hausa of Nigeria and the Jukun of Nigeria. So strong was the factor of cultural ties that long after the establishment of British and German rule, many chiefs in the German-controlled areas of Adamawa continued to pay tribute and do homage to the Fulani Emir of Yola, the former ruler of pre-colonial Adamawa.

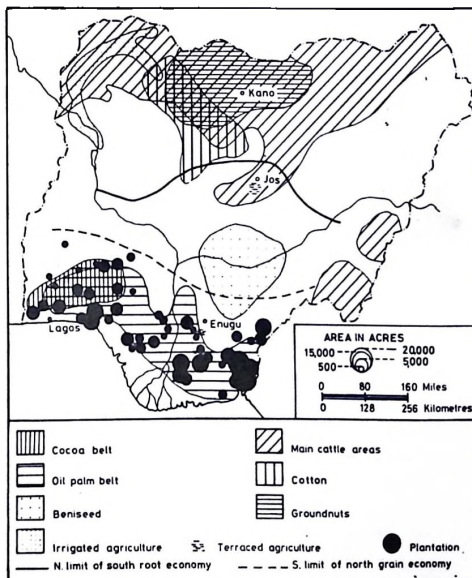
The climatic factor is significant, not only in relation to its effect on the character of the vegetation, but also because climate has, by and large, played a dominant role in the ways of life, including the pattern of economic activities of the various peoples of Nigeria. In Nigeria, as in other parts of the tropics, rainfall is the most important element of climate in so far as agriculture, the main occupation of the people, is concerned. The rhythm of economic activity which is revealed in the farming calendar of the various parts of the country is controlled by the incidence and distribution of rainfall as well as by the length of the rainy season, which decreases from south to north and is a critical factor in agriculture in a country where most farmers do not practise irrigation. The crops produced in various parts of the country differ considerably, largely as a result of the difference in the length of the growing season.



ANNUAL RAINFALL



Southern Nigeria is under the influence of the rain-bearing south-west monsoon winds for most of the year and has a long rainy season of not less than seven months. The south-west, which is drier, has a double maxima rainfall regime with a short dry season in August, the rainiest months being July and September. In consequence it is possible to raise two crops of maize and vegetables per annum, unlike in the wetter southeast where only one crop is possible. The pattern of economic activities in the southwest is therefore different from that of the southeast. By contrast, the far north which is under the influence of the dry north-east trade winds from the Sahara Desert is hot and dry for most of the year, and unlike the forested south, it supports an open savanna vegetation. It is as a result of this difference in climate that the peoples of the north cultivate grains such as millet, guinea corn and *acha*, while the forest peoples cultivate root crops such as yams, cassava and cocoyams. The Middle Belt which has a transitional climate between north and south stands as a zone of mixed culture in which the food crops of the south are cultivated side by side with those of the far north. The main agricultural exports from the far north consists of annual crops such as groundnuts and cotton which have a relatively short growing season, while the main export crops of the wetter south with a long rainy season consists of perennial tree crops such as cocoa, oil palms and rubber. It is also the conditions of the physical environment—the abundance of grass and the relatively low incidence (and absence in the far north) of the tsetse fly that restrict cattle rearing to the grassland areas. The long dry season when water and grazing for cattle is scarce has, however, made it necessary for the Fulani cattlemen to adopt a nomadic mode of existence. Thus during the wet season, the cattle Fulani settle in their traditional homes in the far north, but migrate towards the Lake Chad basin and the Niger-Benue valleys during the dry season months.



FEATURES OF THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

*Conclusion*  
 It is relevant to observe at this point that the climatic factor contributed to the fact that no permanent white settlements similar to those in Kenya and Zimbabwe were established in Nigeria. Hence the problem of the European settler population has not featured in the history of modern Nigeria. The mistaken belief that insalubrity of climate was the cause of the very high mortality rate of European travellers made West Africa (including Nigeria) rather unattractive for white settlement. Before the middle of the 20th century, however, West Africa was no longer the 'white man's grave', thanks to the discovery that the main cause of death of Europeans was malaria, carried by mosquitoes, and not 'insalubrity of climate'.

Almost every Nigerian still suffers from malaria which is endemic in the country. However, the role of climate in the causation of disease in Nigeria is indirect, largely through the high temperature and high humidity conditions which provide very favourable conditions for the spread of insect vectors of human diseases of various kinds. The high incidence of cerebrospinal meningitis which is a serious epidemic disease restricted largely to the drier savanna lands of the far north is much more closely associated with climate. The epidemic usually starts during the cool dry season when the harmattan blows and, although the disease is not caused by the climate, the cold and dust storms of the season are factors which favour its rapid spread. It is a season when people are crowded into dark and poorly ventilated mud huts to escape from dust and cold, hence the rapid spread of the disease and the associated high mortality rate.

### **The Changing Environment**

The waves of human migrations which constitute a major feature of the pre-colonial history of Nigeria brought desert people into grassland environments and grassland peoples into forest environments. In each case the newcomers had to adjust or adapt themselves to their new environments. Thus, the Yoruba who were originally a grassland people, living in mud houses with grass roofs, had to adapt themselves to a forest environment by cultivating root crops in the forest belt and building mud houses with mat roofs. In the same way the Shuwa Arabs, who were originally a nomadic pastoral people, settled down to cultivate the land when they lost almost all their cattle during a major cattle disease epidemic in their new environment. Numerous other examples of adaptation to environments would include the case of the Ijo fishing people of the Niger Delta, the various fishing peoples of the Cross River estuary who migrated there from inland forest environments where they had lived as settled cultivators, and of the hill peoples of the Jos Plateau and north Adamawa Highlands who were obliged to adopt terrace cultivation along the slopes of the hills on which they built their villages.

However, in the process of settlement, man has become the major agent in changing the natural environment of Nigeria. As may be expected the groups that have brought about the greatest changes are the settled cultivators of the grasslands and forest areas of the country. Evidence of these changes are most obvious in the vegetation and the micro-climate of some areas, as well as in the serious cases of soil impoverishment and soil erosion in parts of the country. The relief of the land and physical structure of the country have suffered little or no change.

Starting first with the climate, there has been a long-standing debate on the

question of climatic change in the far north of Nigeria. The devastating droughts which affected northern Nigeria, along with the rest of sahelian Africa in 1973 has once again raised the spectre of the encroaching Sahara. Geological and archeological evidence abound to support the view that the Sahara Desert and the region of Lake Chad had a much more humid climate in pre-historic times, that is, about the end of the last Ice Age. There is, however, no conclusive evidence to support the idea first postulated in 1935 by Stebbing<sup>2</sup> that the climate of the area immediately south of the Sahara was becoming drier, and that desert conditions were spreading southwards. In rejecting this postulate which was made after a rather hurried tour of parts of the southern Sahara, Brynmore Jones (1938)<sup>3</sup> argued that evidence of dessication such as signs of sand encroachment, declining rainfall, a lowering of the water-table and southward retreat of the frontier of settlement were not visible in the field. On the other hand, recent hydrological investigations in the region of Lake Chad have shown that there has been a phenomenal rise in the level of the water-table resulting in the appearance of many new streams, springs and lakes (Carter and Barber, 1956).<sup>4</sup>

A forestry commission, set up jointly by the French and British Governments in 1937 to investigate this problem, also rejected the postulate of the encroaching Sahara. The commission, however, noted that there was an increasing deterioration of the environment by wind and running water and that this was caused by man, through the extensive deforestation and cultivation of vast areas. Carter's work on the rise in the water-table in parts of Borno State also attributes the phenomenon to deforestation through cultivation and overgrazing. The reported increases in flood heights along the Rima valley in Sokoto State since the beginning of this century has also been attributed to the destruction of vegetation of the headwaters, resulting in increasing runoff and greater sedimentation of the river bed which is the cause of the increases in flood heights (Ledger, 1961).<sup>5</sup> One consequence of the changing hydrological situation in the Rima valley is that "the inhabitants of the towns situated on the edge of the plain where formerly they grew excellent crops of guinea corn, have been forced by increasing floods to leave their farms and to migrate to less fertile land on the plateau" (Provincial Forestry Office, Sokoto, 1937).<sup>6</sup>

The environment of the far north of Nigeria has therefore suffered considerable deterioration through extensive interference with the vegetation by man. It does not appear, however, that the present condition of the local environment can be attributed to climatic change, although the continued diminishing of Lake Chad would tend to support the occurrence of drier conditions. There is a greater need to adopt conservation measures for protecting the headwaters and watersheds as well as for preservation of forests. In this way it would be possible to prevent a total destruction of the sahelian environment resulting in desert conditions such as now prevail in the

2. E.P. Stebbing, "The Encroaching Sahara", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 85, 1935, pp. 506-24.

3. B. Jones, "Dessication and the West African colonies", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 91, 1938, pp. 401-23.

4. J.D. Carter, and W. Barber, "The Rise in the Water-table in parts of Potiskum Division, Borno Province," *Records of the Geographical Survey of Nigeria*, 1956, pp. 5-13.

5. D.C. Ledger, "Recent Hydrological Changes in the Rima Basin of Northern Nigeria", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 127, 1961, pp. 477-86.

6. Provincial Forestry Office, Sokoto, "Report on Sylvan conditions in Northern Sokoto". Unpublished report, 1937.

heart of ancient Ghana, the dessication of which was caused by a deterioration of the environment similar to what is being observed in parts of northern Nigeria.

It is obvious from the above that the role of man in changing the natural environment is most easily shown through his alteration of the original vegetation. As a result of the dominant influence of rainfall on vegetative life in the tropics, the natural vegetation of Nigeria is arranged in zones which replicate the climatic (rainfall) belts of the country. The drier north which has a shorter growing season supports savanna vegetation of grass and scattered trees, while the wetter south supports dense forest vegetation. There are, however, only a few sparsely settled areas in the country with a vegetation that can be described as natural. Rather, as a result of the long period of human occupation and exploitative use of the land, the vegetation of the country has been greatly modified. In the Sudan savanna zone which is the main cattle area of the country, overgrazing and intensive cultivation of the land around the Sokoto and Kano regions have resulted in soil deterioration and the southward extension of the sahel region of thorn shrubs. In these areas where the bush is regularly set on fire either for hunting purposes or cultivation as well as for quickening the regeneration of succulent grass for cattle, the vegetation consists of open grasslands, characterized by very short grasses with scattered and stunted fire-resistant trees. Remnants of the original vegetation of this zone, however, survive along water courses as fringe woodlands as well as on inaccessible hill tops.

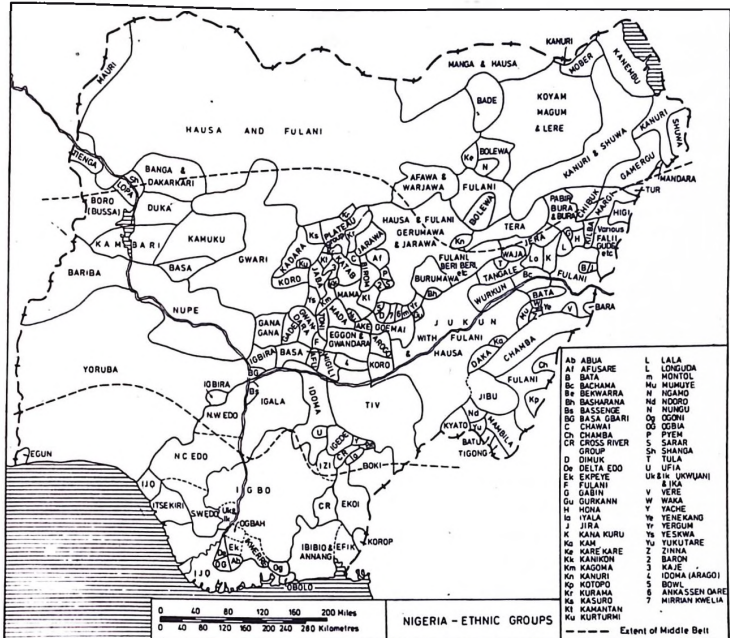
A large part of the southern Guinea savanna zone is usually described as 'derived savanna', because it is primarily a biotic climax resulting from continuous cultivation of the original forest woodland and not as climatic climax like the Sudan savanna. Annual bush fires are also common in this zone. It is populated by tall grasses and a denser stand of fire-resistant forest trees. The complete destruction of the rain forest in parts of Owerri, Ikot Ekpene and Abak show the extent to which the natural vegetation has been altered by man. Over large parts of these areas present day vegetation consists of open palm bush. In other parts of the forest belt, the original vegetation has also been largely altered as a result of continuous farming. Thus in parts of Benin, Ondo, Ibadan, Calabar, Ikom, and Ijebu areas, man-made forests of rubber, oil palms and cocoa have replaced the original rain forest vegetation. It is mainly in the forest reserves created during the early years of colonial rule that a semblance of the original rain forest may be found.

### **The Peoples and their Cultures**

Archaeological evidence from various parts of Nigeria suggest that parts of the country have been settled by man since the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age period (500,000-9000 B.C.). According to the 1952/53 census, there are more than 200 distinct ethnic groups in Nigeria, most of whom have distinct customs, traditions, and languages. The larger and politically dominant groups include the Yoruba (10 million), the Igbo (7 million), the Hausa (16 million) and the Fulani (5 million). Other prominent but less numerous groups include the Edo, the Ibibio of the Cross River State, the Tiv of the Benue valley, the Nupe of the middle Niger valley, and the Kanuri of the Lake Chad basin. The large concentration of the smallest ethnic groups in the Middle Belt where there are more than 180 different groups is a significant feature of the distribution of ethnic groups in Nigeria. The hostility existing between neighbouring groups and the



small size of their fighting forces exposed them to the mercy of the larger and more powerful groups from the north and the south. The result was that the Middle Belt became a major source region for slaves traded both across the Sahara as well as across the Atlantic.



### ETHNIC GROUPS

Each ethnic group occupies a distinct and continuous territory and most of the smaller groups had very little contact with other groups before the spread of Islam and the imposition of colonial rule. There was, however, considerable trade and cultural contacts between the major grassland groups featuring the Hausa, Fulani, Nupe and northern Yoruba. In the forest belt a long-standing historical link existed between the Edo of Benin with the Yoruba of Ife and Lagos. The delta people whose territory is too swampy for cultivation and who, in consequence, produced mainly fish and salt, carried on a sizeable trade with the forest peoples who supplied them basic foodstuffs in exchange for fish and salt. During the 18th and 19th centuries the delta peoples accumulated much wealth because of their middleman position in the trade between the hinterland peoples and European traders on the coast.

It was during the colonial period when the various groups inhabiting Nigeria came under one government and when roads and railways were built that trade and cultural contacts among the different ethnic groups increased substantially. At the same time,

similar contacts between people of the same linguistic groups living in different colonial territories suffered a considerable decline.

During the last three hundred years, the peoples of Nigeria have been exposed to various influence from across the Sahara as well as from Europe. The geographical location of each group has been a major factor in the type and source of dominant influence that it has experienced. Partly as a result of this fact, but also as a result of considerable differences in the environments occupied by the various groups, it is necessary to consider the peoples of Nigeria under two major geographical groups, namely the forest peoples and the grassland peoples.

### **Peoples of the Forest Belt**

X The oldest surviving groups in Nigeria are to be found in the forests of the south, including the mangrove swamp forests of the Niger Delta and coastal creeks which have provided protection for refugee cultures. Considering their level of technology and, in particular, their farm implements, the most suitable environment for the Negro is the grassland areas which can be cultivated without much effort being spent in clearing the land. It is not surprising therefore that the forests attracted mostly people seeking refuge from southward pressing groups from the north. The protection offered by the forests is obvious from the experience of the mounted Fulani warriors who had great difficulty in penetrating and fighting in a forest environment.

The largest known peoples of the forest belt are the Yoruba and Edo peoples who live in the southwest or western states of Nigeria and the Igbo, Ibibio and Ekoi peoples of the southeast or eastern states of Nigeria. Marked contrasts exist between the political and social organization of the Yoruba and Edo-speaking peoples who successfully established and maintained vast kingdoms within the forest environment and the so-called stateless societies of the Igbo, Ibibio and Ekoi peoples of the south-east of Nigeria. The contrasts are the more remarkable, since both sets of peoples live in a similar environment and cultivate the same type of crops. It is relevant, however, to observe that the empire-building Yoruba and Edo peoples of the western forests had greater contacts with the empire-building groups of the far north, than was the case with the politically fragmented peoples of the eastern forests. The traditional religion of the forest peoples remained almost completely insulated from the influence of Islam up till the early years of the colonial period, when Christianity was introduced and readily adopted in many districts. Since the Christian missionaries were the innovators and agents of the diffusion of Western type education, the coastal and forest peoples of the south have since produced the largest number of educated and highly trained people in the country's labour force.

The Yoruba-speaking peoples of Nigeria are concentrated in the Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Kwara and Lagos States. In addition to linguistic homogeneity, the Yoruba share common traditions and trace descent from a common ancestor called Oduduwa, who is believed to have established the Ife dynasty. It is significant that the Yoruba were never united under a common government. Rather, Yorubaland consisted of several powerful monarchical states such as Ife, Oyo, Egba and Ijebu. Certain rulers were, however, recognized throughout the whole of Yorubaland, the most important of these being the *Oni* of Ife, who was regarded as the spiritual ruler of all Yoruba and the *Alafin* of Oyo who was the political leader of the Yoruba people.

Although the Yoruba are predominantly an agricultural people, they have a unique and long-standing tradition of living in large towns, the largest of which include Ibadan (627,380 in 1963) Ogbomosho (319,880), Oshogbo (210,380), Ilorin (218,550), Abeokuta (187,290), Ilesha (165,880) and Ede (134,550). The Yoruba are the most urbanized group not only in Nigeria but throughout the African continent. The growth of these large urban centres derived in part from the need for defence, but also largely as a result of the highly centralized political organization of the people. Among other things, urbanization facilitated the growth of trade among the Yoruba as well as between them and other Nigerian peoples, notably the Nupe and Hausa.

As with most Nigerian peoples, the extended family is the basic social unit of the Yoruba. And since the family lives together, each extended family has a territorial existence (the large traditional compound) within the town as well as a distinct area of farmland in the rural areas. The main occupation of the men is farming, while the women engage primarily in trading. There is also a considerable number of professional artists and craftsmen who excel in wood carving and other crafts. The famous terracotta and bronze heads of Ife, which are reputed to be up to 800 years old testify to the high quality of traditional Yoruba craftsmanship.

The Yoruba stand out as a deeply religious group as well as for their great respect for superiors and elderly people. Yet the Yoruba is extremely independent, diplomatic and resentful of despotic leadership, qualities which have been clearly expressed not only during the pre-colonial Yoruba civil wars but also in the politics of Yorubaland since Nigerian independence.

The Edo-speaking people who are best known for their once powerful and famous Kingdom and Empire of Benin, occupy the territory immediately east of Yorubaland. Several close traditional links exist between these two ethnic groups, whose political systems are also similar. The Yoruba town of Eko (Lagos) is reputed to have been founded by the Edo of Benin, while the first historic *Oba* of Benin is believed to have been of Yoruba descent. The famous bronze heads of Benin are thought to have been made by the same process earlier used by Yoruba artists and craftsmen at Ife. It is also striking that, like the major Yoruba sub-groups, the Edo were organized into a state in which the focus of political and cultural activities was Benin City, the seat of the all-powerful *Oba* of Benin. Compared with the Yoruba, the Edo have a stronger sense of political unity, although the relatively smaller size of the Edo population appears to have been an important factor in the ability of the *Oba* to keep the Edo people under one central authority.

At the height of its power in the late 15th century, Benin influence extended from the banks of the lower Niger valley to Dahomey (modern Republic of Benin). The Benin Empire therefore embraced a large number of ethnic groups including the Edo themselves, the western Igbo, and some Yoruba groups. Today, several Igbo towns like Onitsha, Atani, and Ossomari, all located on the east bank of the lower Niger claim to have been founded by migrants from Benin.

East of the lower Niger valley, the two major ethnic groups inhabiting the forest-belt are the Igbo and the Ibibio, each of whom is divided into several sub-groups. Neither of these two groups was ever organized into a large state or kingdom similar to those of the Yoruba and Edo. Rather the largest political unit was the village group which had a population of only a few thousand people. Even within the village group authority was never concentrated in the hands of any individual or family and although there



were chiefs, usually elderly men, there was no ruling aristocracy which wielded authority as a specialized full-time occupation. Rather the village or village-group was ruled by a council of elders, usually the heads of the major extended families. There was never an Igbo state or Ibibio state with a political head or a widely accepted religious leader. The political impact of the Ibibio State Union formed in the late thirties was minimal, and the apparent success of the Igbo State Union which was formed a few years later was based on the exploitation of group feelings in a multi-national federation. It was the highly decentralized political organization of the eastern forest peoples that has earned them the description of stateless societies.

Like the Yoruba and the Edo of the west, the Igbo and the Ibibio are a settled agricultural people. But unlike the western peoples, the Igbo and Ibibio live in small villages, and not in towns, urbanization being a phenomenon of the colonial period in the eastern states, except amongst the Onitsha Igbo and the riverine Ibibio (or Efik) of Calabar. The complete dispersal of family compounds over the village territory is one of the most prominent features of the cultural landscape of parts of Awka, Owerri, Nsukka, Abak, and Ikot Ekpene areas of the eastern states of Nigeria. Compact village settlements have, however, survived in the sparsely settled forest areas of Ikom, Calabar, Obubra and Bende areas as well as in the Niger Delta.

The Aro Igbo of Arochuku stand out as a unique group in the history of the eastern forest peoples. Largely as a result of the mythical powers attributed to the Aro oracle, the *Long Juju*, based at Arochuku, the Aro came to be respected and feared as the children of the god throughout the area now constituted into the four eastern states of Nigeria. Aro people were therefore free to travel unmolested throughout the area at a time when other groups did not feel safe to venture out of their territory. It was this privilege that helped the Aro to play a major role in organizing and controlling the flow of slaves in parts of the eastern states. In the process of their commercial and religious sojourns the Aro established numerous 'colonies' on conquered land as well as on land given to them by the host communities. One of these colonies, Aro-Ndizorgu, now has a population which is much larger than that of the combined parent Aro villages at Arochuku.

### **The Grassland Peoples**

The grassland or savanna peoples of Nigeria fall into two distinct geographical groups, namely, the Middle Belt peoples and the peoples of the far north. The Middle Belt is noted for the large number of very small ethnic groups, including the hill-dwelling peoples of the Jos Plateau region and the eastern highlands of Adamawa. Most of these land-locked groups still occupy districts which are not readily accessible to motorized transport. Trade and cultural contacts between some of them are still minimal, although an increasing number now produce considerable surplus food crops for sale to itinerant agents of urban-based food contractors and traders.

The two largest and most prominent of the Middle Belt grassland peoples are the Tiv of the Benue valley in the east and the Nupe of the middle Niger valley in the west. Considerable literature exist on the Tiv who are probably the most extreme of the so-called stateless societies of Nigeria. Tiv political structure is highly fragmented and, according to Bohannon, the only Tiv group of which one could say 'there must be some one responsible' was the compound, which was essentially a domestic rather than

a political unit. The early British colonial administrators were embarrassed by the virtual absence of political organization amongst the Tiv, whose lack of political units came to earn them the title of 'a people divided against itself'. The difficulty of finding anyone with executive powers of any kind amongst the Tiv constituted a serious problem to the establishment of 'Indirect Rule' amongst them. But although the Tiv lacked political organization, they were not lacking in political leadership, since men of great affluence and impeccable personal qualities were readily recognized as political leaders.<sup>7</sup>

It is relevant to observe at this point that the so-called stateless societies of Nigeria consist of those groups whose ethnic territory is so crowded that the people experience acute shortage of farmland. Evidence from Tivland, Igboland and Ibibioland shows that in every overcrowded district the heavy demand for farmland made it impossible for any one central authority to prevent individual land ownership as was the practice in the Yoruba, Benin and those Igbo and Ibibi areas where farmland was in abundance. And it is precisely in those areas where the ownership and control of land is dispersed that authority in general social and political affairs is also dispersed. The importance of land as the basic resource of the people cannot be overemphasized and, according to the Bohannans, any Tiv compound head who could not provide sufficient farmland for his dependants would find himself 'sitting alone', while his people migrated to establish their own compounds.

The Nupe, unlike the Tiv, have a rather integrated political organization which is similar in some ways to the Yoruba system. Like the Yoruba, they live in large nucleated villages, most of which have daughter settlements which consist of small farm hamlets called *tunga*. But while the Tiv compound, a much smaller unit than the *tunga* often exists independent of the parent settlement, the Nupe *tunga* has no social life of its own and celebrates its feasts and ceremonies with the mother village. (Baldwin, 1957, p. 32)<sup>8</sup>. The relationship between the *tunga* and the parent village of the Nupe is very similar to that between town and farm in the Yoruba cocoa belt.

In the more open grassland areas of the Nigerian Sudan, the most numerous and politically dominant groups are the Hausa, the Fulani and the Kanuri. Hausa is the most widely spoken language in Nigeria, and is generally understood in most parts of the northern states. The Hausa peoples of Nigeria are, however, concentrated in Sokoto, Kano and Kaduna States. The Hausa political scene featured a number of city-states which were never unified until the Fulani conquest in the early part of the 19th century. It was after the Fulani conquest that Islam became more widely adopted, even though it had been introduced as far back as the 14th century. Today, most Hausa profess the Muslim faith and both their political and social life, including the land tenure and legal systems are very much influenced by Islamic principles.

Hausa economy has always featured the intensive cultivation of guinea corn, millet, maize and beans, and most Hausa live in small agricultural villages, although there are also large traditional Hausa towns, including Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Sokoto. Although many Hausa own cattle, the care of these animals is usually entrusted to the Cattle Fulani, while the pastoral activities of the Hausa are largely limited to keeping

7. P. Bohannan, and L. Bohannan, *The Tiv of Central Nigeria*, London, 1962.

8. K.D.S. Baldwin, *The Niger Agricultural Project*, London, 1957.

9. K.M. Buchanan, and J.C. Pugh, *Land and People in Nigeria*, London, 1955, p. 58.

goats and chickens. The Hausa are one of the few grassland groups who practise traditional forms of irrigation in the country, and all over Hausaland river flood plains, usually called *fadama*, are put under intensive cultivation during the dry season months.

The Hausa are well known as skilled craftsmen and are probably the most travelled traders in West Africa. Popular craft products include leather goods, wood carvings, blankets of camel hair, and perfumes. These products constitute the main trade goods distributed by the ubiquitous itinerant Hausa trader. In Nigeria, the Hausa are largely responsible for organizing the trade in cattle and kolanuts between western Nigeria and the northern states of Nigeria. Often the cash receipts from cattle sales are used in purchasing kolanuts which are then shipped for sale in the main consuming areas of the Sudan and sahelian zones. The Hausa cattle and kolanut brokers and transporters usually live in the larger Yoruba towns of Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode and Shagamu, but many Hausa kola buyers and seasonal agricultural labourers may be found in small villages all over the cocoa and kolanut growing areas of southwestern Nigeria.

Hausa architecture displays a remarkable adaptation to the physical environment. In the drier areas of Kano, Katsina and Sokoto with plenty of good building earth, the houses consist of square or round mudwalled structures with flat roofs of mud supported by a framework of timber. In the wetter parts of Hausaland, the houses may also be square or round. Although the walls are also made of mud, the roofs consist of sloping grass thatch similar to those in the rainier central districts of Nigeria. Hausa houses are usually arranged in closed family compounds which are enclosed by walls of mud or grass mat, to ensure adequate privacy for the family.

Hausaland is also the home of the Fulani of Nigeria who are probably the only ethnic group in Africa with no distinct territory. Rather, the Fulani are to be found in almost every country of the Sudan zone, extending from Senegal in the West to the upper Nile in the east. They migrated into Nigeria from the west and settled amongst the Hausa and subsequently conquered them during the Fulani jihad led by Uthman dan Fodio in the early 19th century.

Two main types of Fulani are usually recognized. They are the Cattle Fulani and the Settled or Town Fulani. The Cattle Fulani is essentially a nomadic cattle rearer who migrates regularly with his cattle in search of water and good grazing, particularly during the dry season. He leads a simple life and lives in a camp of tents or grass shelters which is deserted as soon as a death occurs. Since the Cattle Fulani rarely marry outside their tribe, they have been able to maintain their identity in spite of generations of sojourning amongst pure Negro peoples. Also unlike the Town Fulani, the Cattle Fulani is not always a devout Muslim, but often practises many customs of traditional religion.

The Town or Settled Fulani live in the conquered towns of Hausaland, where he is essentially an administrator or a hoe cultivator. Many of them own large herds of cattle which they entrust into the care of their nomadic brethren. They are devout Muslims and have been largely responsible for the spread of Islam throughout Hausaland and parts of the Middle Belt.

The Kanuri of Borno State are the last of the major grassland peoples considered in this chapter. Like the Hausa, the Kanuri are Muslims, but Islam was already well-established in Borno before the Fulani jihad in Hausaland and, although the Fulani

made several efforts to conquer Borno, they never succeeded in doing so. Most Kanuri, like the Hausa, are settled cultivators and traders. Many of them also own large herds of cattle which are under the care of Shuwa Arabs or the Cattle Fulani.

### Distribution and Movements of Population

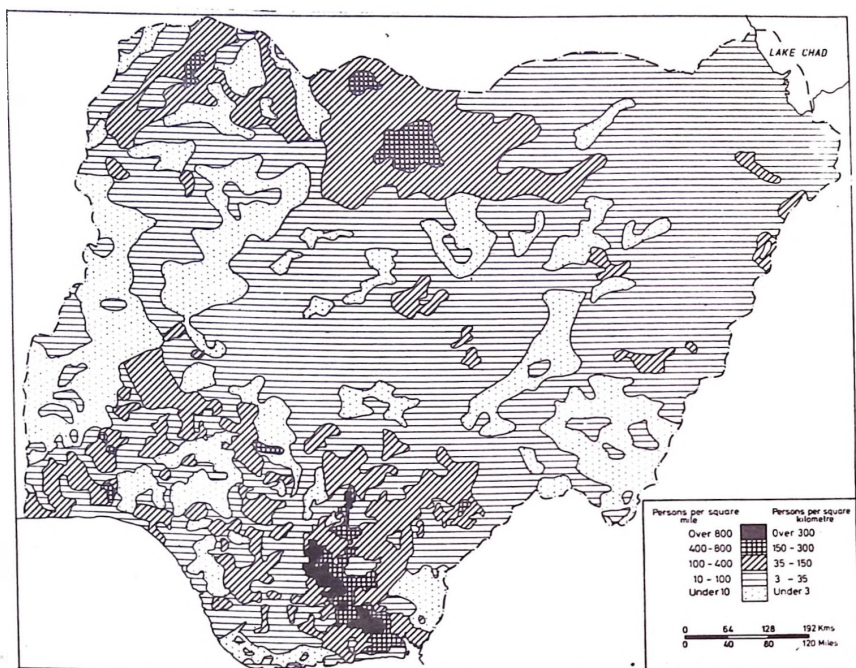
With a population of 56 million in 1963, increasing to about 70 million in 1973, Nigeria is by far the most populous country in Africa. This population is distributed most unevenly over its area of 922,280 sq. km. (356,000 square miles) such that a few districts have more than 308 persons per sq. km. (800 persons per sq. mile) while vast areas are virtually uninhabited, having less than 4 persons per sq. km. (10 per sq. mile). Writing about the population of Nigeria in 1955, Buchanan and Pugh described the pattern of distribution as 'immature' arguing that the close adjustment of population densities to environmental conditions which is typical of long-settled areas is lacking in the country and that the process of land occupation and settlement is incomplete over much of Nigeria. In spite of the large and increasing movements of people into the cities and rural areas of the western states (Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Lagos and Bendel States) since the early 1950s, the general pattern of the distribution of population in the country in 1974 is basically the same as in 1953. It is also of particular significance for our discussion in this chapter that this general pattern of population distribution has remained unchanged since about 1900.

What then are the factors which have made some areas so attractive to settlement for so long and have tended to work against a redistribution of population from the land-hungry, congested districts to the vast sparsely settled parts of the country? Physical factors of the environment have been important but historical factors including the fixation of ethnic group boundaries during the early years of the colonial period have also been very important but historical factors including the fixation of ethnic group boundaries during the early years of the colonial period have also been very important, not only in explaining the present-day distribution of population in the country but also in perpetuating, so far, the broad pattern as it was in 1900. But before examining these factors it is necessary to present a brief description of the population map of the country.

The population density map (Fig. 5) which is based on a dot map of the 1952/53 census shows clearly the major concentrations of population in the country and is very similar to the population density map of 1963 published by the Federal Surveys, Lagos. The very densely populated areas have a minimum rural density of 192 persons per sq. km. (500 per sq. miles) rising to over 384 per sq. km. (1,000 per sq. mile) in parts of the Cross River, Imo, Anambra, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Lagos States. There are three major areas in the south and three in the far north. The southern and more extensive areas of very high density are (i) the Central Igbo districts of Orlu, Udi, Okigwe, eastern Onitsha and eastern Owerri areas, (ii) the Annang-Ibibio districts of Ikot Ekpene, Abak and Western Uyo areas and (iii) parts of Ijebu, Abeokuta and Ikeja districts. In the far north, the three most densely populated areas are (iv) the Kano-closed settled zone, (v) the Sokoto 'Home' districts and (vi) the Katsina 'Home' districts.

A few pockets of high population density occur within the Middle Belt in the region of the Jos Plateau, southern Tivland and Okenne districts. Outside these areas, the vast Middle Belt is characterized by very extensive areas of very low population





### RURAL POPULATION DENSITY

densities. Other areas which are very sparsely settled include the Cross River district, the Niger Delta and the Lake Chad basin. Almost all the forest reserves in the country are located in these sparsely settled areas, many of which also attract migrant farmers from the land-hungry, densely populated areas.

The fact that historical factors have been largely responsible for the present pattern of distribution of population in Nigeria deserves special emphasis in this chapter which considers the relevance of the Nigerian environment to the interpretation of the course of Nigerian history. Although the major concentrations of population in the Yoruba cocoa belt, the Kano groundnut belt and the Jos Plateau are partly a result of economic development during the colonial period, these areas happen to have been already densely settled before 1900, largely as a result of the civil wars and slave raids of the pre-colonial period. The large concentrations of rural population in the Kano, Katsina and Sokoto districts survived because for many generations the Hausa and later the Fulani rulers of these city-states were able to provide protection and stable government for the people thereby attracting more people from the war-ravaged borderland districts. The Hausa-Borno borderlands which Barth<sup>10</sup> described as

10. H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa 1849-1855*, New York, Vol. I and Vol. III, 1857.

flourishing and populous in 1851 are, on the other hand, very sparsely settled today largely because, by 1854, the area had been reduced to a state of ruins and misery as a result of the destruction and devastation perpetrated by civil wars. The successful introduction and expansion of groundnut cultivation and the development of factory industry has now reinforced the concentration of people in the rich agricultural districts of Kano, while the relatively stagnant economic regions of Sokoto and Katsina now export large numbers of able-bodied young men to the growing agricultural and industrial areas of Lagos and the western states.

The smaller concentrations of population in the Middle Belt districts of the Jos Plateau and Okenne are also largely a product of the civil unrests of the pre-colonial period. In these areas, hill sites provided adequate refugee outposts for people fleeing from the onslaught of mounted Fulani warriors, and have since remained islands of dense concentration of population in a largely sparsely settled Middle Belt zone. Tin mining has since attracted more people to the Jos Plateau, while the economically stranded Okenne district is now a major source of migrant labour into the Yoruba cocoa belt and the Benin rubber belt.

Inter-group warfare and slave raids were also largely responsible for the large-scale depopulation of vast areas of the Middle Belt which today supports only 20 per cent of the population of Nigeria on more than 40 per cent of the land area of the country. One of the districts which suffered most from slave raids by the Fulani and the people of Dahomey is the grassland area of Oyo and Egbado in Yorubaland. Eyewitness accounts of the devastation caused by the Fulani have been left behind by early European explorers like Lander and Clapperton.<sup>11</sup> The area around Kontagora, like the rest of the Middle Belt, also suffered from extensive slave raids by the powerful Hausa city-states of the far north. The open savanna landscape of the Middle Belt and the fact that the area is inhabited by numerous small ethnic groups contributed much to their inability to resist invasions from the more numerous and better organized larger ethnic groups from the far north and south of the country.

The large concentrations of people in parts of Imo, Anambra and Cross River States are more difficult to explain, particularly since these areas have the most leached and impoverished soils in the country. Slave raids, were rare in these parts of the country, since most of the slaves were obtained both through the medium of the bogus Aro deity, the Long Juju of Arochuku, and through the sale of social undesirables, including thieves, stubborn children and adulterers. The relative absence of regular warfare, with its attendant destruction of life and property, helps to explain both the concentration of people in the area and the fact that the people live in dispersed compounds and not in large nucleated settlements.

There are, however, many parts of the country which have always been sparsely populated because of difficult environmental conditions. The swamps of the Niger Delta, for example, have always been sparsely populated and it appears that this situation will remain unchanged for a long time. The seasonally flooded lowlands of the Great Muri Plain of the middle Benue valley have also never been densely populated because settlement is restricted as a result of swampy conditions during the rainy season and by lack of water during the dry season. Finally, the extensive hilly and heavily forested districts lying between the Cross River and the Cameroon border,

11. H. Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, London, 1829.

which was described by Johnston in 1888 as "an utter Wilderness of forest, uninhabited by man"<sup>12</sup> has always been sparsely populated, and today much of it remains under forest reserves.

The establishment of British rule and the fixing of boundaries between the various ethnic groups as well as between clans and villages brought to an end the practice whereby land-hungry groups which were powerful enough could forcibly encroach upon the land of neighbouring groups. One result of this historical accident has been to reinforce the uneven distribution of population in the country as of 1900. Consequently, some villages now suffer from acute shortage of farmland, while other villages have much more land than they require. This is the background to the increasing migrations of the Igbo, Sokoto Hausa and Ebira into the cocoa and rubber growing districts of southwestern Nigeria. An increasing number of people now migrate into the industrial port towns of the south and the administrative and industrial capitals of the new states. However, the majority of migrants (about 60 per cent) originating from rural areas still go to other rural areas.

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present the basic facts about the Nigerian environment and to show the relevance of these facts to the ways of life and the course of human history in the country. It is not suggested that these facts have by themselves determined the trend of historical development in the country; rather, what is stressed is the fact that in the process of settlement, man has become the major agent in changing the natural environment of Nigeria. This process of change will continue just as the volume of inter-regional migrations of people which have been largely encouraged by regional inequalities in the allocation of development capital and basic infrastructure. The conclusion, therefore, is that in Nigeria, as in other countries, irrespective of the stage reached in the social and technological ladder by any part of the country, geographical factors have merely influenced but have not determined the course of human history.

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12. H.H. Johnston, "The Bantu Borderland in Western Africa", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 10, 1888, p. 635.



## 2

### PREHISTORY

THURSTAN SHAW

#### Early Man

Nigeria has not so far produced remains of early forms of man or man-like creatures such as were living between one and three million years ago in eastern and southern Africa, nor indeed has West Africa as a whole. Is our present lack of data due to the fact that such creatures were not living at the time in West Africa, or is it simply because the evidence has not yet been found? Not enough work has been done to answer this question with assurance, but the balance of probability is that there were early hominids living in parts of West Africa. As far as one can see, there must have been ecological conditions in certain parts of West Africa very similar to those which supported the early man-like creatures of East Africa. But, of course, this does not mean that these areas did, in fact, support them. In spite of some similarity of conditions, precisely the same range of animal species does not occur in the West African savannas as in East Africa, nor in the same density; and, whereas there are many areas of tropical rain forest which could support gorillas today, they are in fact only found in two separate, circumscribed areas, both to the east of Nigeria's borders.

There is one positive piece of evidence for thinking that early hominids might have lived in suitable areas of Nigeria in the Early Pleistocene; and that is the finding of the craniofacial portion of a skull in Villa-franchian deposits 200 km. west-south-west of Largeau, in the Republic of Tchad. Recent examination of this fossil suggests that it may have been evolving towards the type of man belonging to the Middle Pleistocene, known as *Homo erectus*. Specimens of this type have been found not only in East Africa but also in Algeria. Bones of an extinct type of hippotamus, *Hippopotamus imaguncula*, were found at a depth of 58 m. in a well in Borno, and this indicates that deposits of the Chad basin contain palaeontological material of Pleistocene age—and as likely as not, archaeological material as well. Unfortunately, there has been no subsequent violent change in drainage pattern such as produced Olduvai George to cut through and expose these thick Pleistocene deposits, and in Borno the thick mantle of later drift hides what may be there.

#### Early Stone Tools

Although early tools were made of bone and wood as well as of stone, wood is rarely preserved, and soil conditions militate against the survival of bone in many parts of

Nigeria. Apart from utilized and roughly-trimmed flakes, the earliest and simplest types of stone tools consist of pebbles or lumps flaked by percussion to form crude chopping and cutting tools with edges anything from 3 cm. to 12 cm. long; they are known as Oldowan type tools, after Olduvai Gorge, in Tanzania. Such tools are found in many places in Africa, and the early men who made them may well have spread over most of the savanna and bushy grasslands of Africa. Examples of such tools are known from a number of places in Nigeria, but it is not at the moment possible to be sure if any of them genuinely date to the same period as the Oldowan industry in East Africa. The difficulty is that although there are many examples which conform in shape and style to the earliest kinds of stone tools, pebble tools of this kind had a long history and are also found as a component of later industrial complexes. So we can only be sure that pebble tools belong to an early period if they are independently dated by being found *in situ* in deposits which can be dated, either relatively or by physical methods. Geological evidence for an early date has been adduced at Beli, on the R. Taraba in the south of the North-East State (now Borno), but this has not been confirmed.

### Acheulian

In northern-eastern and southern Africa, the Oldowan industrial complex was succeeded by that known as the Acheulian, named after the site of St. Acheul in northern France, where the characteristics 'hand-axes' or 'bifaces' were first found in quantity. These are tools of oval or pointed oval shape with a cutting edge all round carefully trimmed from both sides; one variety, known as a 'cleaver', has a straight transverse cutting edge. We do not know exactly what these bifaces were used for; probably they were general purpose tools, useful among other things for cutting up and skinning game animals killed in the hunt. For by now, although women and children probably still provided at least half the food intake by means of collecting wild fruit, nuts and roots, men banded together in cooperative activities to hunt large game animals. The use of fire was known, at any rate by the end of Acheulian times. The type of man responsible for making Acheulian implements, wherever this is known, was that called *Homo erectus*, with a brain size considerably less than the average for modern man but in other ways well on the way of having similar body form.

The Acheulian is prolific in the Sahara north of about Latitude 16°N. Perhaps this distribution is to be correlated with the last but one glacial period in Europe—or possibly with the earliest maximum of the last; at such a time there would have been more rainfall in the northern Sahara, and the desertic zone would have moved southwards and been unattractive for human occupation. An exception to this was the high ground of the Jos Plateau, where the climate would not have been so arid and would have provided the open or lightly wooded grasslands of the type favoured by Acheulian man; it therefore formed a kind of promontory of habitable land projecting southwards from the Aïr massif and the main Saharan Acheulian area north of 16°N. Acheulian hunters may well have found this area as a result of following the seasonal movement of game. The most prolific site known on the Jos Plateau is at Mai Idon Toro, where two layers of gravel, separated by a clay layer, produced industries in which cleavers far outnumbered other tools; the gravels are some 11 m. above present river level and represent terraces of the river dating to a time before it had cut down to

its present level. On the other hand, in the gravels of an old buried river channel at Pingell, near the northern edge of the plateau, there were nearly three times as many bifaces as cleavers. Acheulian material is also found off the plateau to the west, in the Nok valley, where gravels in the oldest infill of the buried channel produced ten times as many bifaces as cleavers. A radiocarbon date of 'more than 39,000 years before the present' was obtained for carbonized wood from these gravels. Such a radiocarbon date could, of course, theoretically indicate that the tools were incorporated in the gravels any number of years before 41,000 B.C. but the likelihood is that they do not date before 150,000 B.C. and could well pertain to about 65,000 B.C. The different proportions of bifaces to cleavers at the different sites may represent differences of date or differences of function—that bifaces and cleavers were used for different activities and that different activities were being carried on at the different sites. East of the Jos Plateau area Acheulian materials have come from the surface of gravels exposed some 15 m. above present river level near Ngalda, at the bend of the Gongola River.

### The Sangoan

There are difficulties of definition over the Sangoan industrial complex, first recognized at and named after Sango Bay on the western shores of Lake Victoria, and it has been disputed whether there is a true Sangoan in West Africa at all. It does seem, however, that in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa a complex of industries came into being, following the Acheulian, which retained some of the tool-kit of the latter, such as pick and biface forms; the cleaver disappeared and spheroids become rare, while there was a much greater emphasis on the picks, often of a heavy and massive form; choppers, often made of flanked pebbles, also occur.

In Nigeria, Sangoan type material has a different distribution from the Acheulian, suggesting a new pattern of settlement. It is found particularly in the Upper Sokoto valley and in the stretch of country south of the Jos Plateau and north of the tropical rain forest, occurring in gravels at heights of 10 to 20 m. above modern river level. An industry from the Niger valley above Bussa consisting mostly of worked pebbles without picks is regarded on geological grounds as nevertheless being contemporary with the Sangoan lower down the river; such a local variation may have been dictated by the character of the raw material, which consists of quartz pebbles. Elsewhere in Africa the Sangoan is allocated to dates after 50,000 B.C. and is associated with arid conditions preceding the last major wet period and into the earlier part of this. The characteristic tool-kits are found in more wooded areas than the open savannas favoured by Acheulian man but not in the high rain forest itself. It has been suggested that the Sangoan industrial complex may represent a need to adapt to more wooded country in an increasingly arid climate.

In Nigeria there are no radiocarbon dates for a Sangoan industry. If the gravels 10m.—20m. above the Niger were laid down when the river was graded to the high sea level (the 'Upper Inehirian') which has been radiocarbon dated at the mouth of the Senegal River to around 30,000 B.C. then the presence in them of unrolled Sangoan artifacts suggests a comparable date, while the rolled specimens would be contemporaneous or older. It is possible that the distribution of the Sangoan in West Africa represents a way of life adapted to respond to dry conditions before 40,000 B.C., after

which Lake Chad began to fill up and spread. Perhaps the game which had formerly been hunted became scarcer and moved southwards, and the men of the time had to keep near the perennial rivers and adapt their diet to an increase in vegetable products obtained from the gallery forests. This may be reflected in the tool-kit, especially in the emphasis on picks which may have served both to dig up roots and tubers and to dig pit-traps for animals which could no longer be so easily hunted in the open. Much of this is speculation, and we need to learn much more about the industries to which the name Sangoan has been given in Nigeria. We do not know what human type was responsible for making Sangoan implements as no human remains have been found associated with them, but it would not be unreasonable to suppose that it was a form closely approaching *Homo sapiens*, perhaps intermediate between *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens rhodesiensis* (see below).

### The Middle Stone Age

The term 'Middle Stone Age', first of all evolved for southern Africa, is used to describe a group of industrial complexes covering roughly the time span 35,000 B.C.-12,000 B.C. These industries show greater localization and specialization than before, and there are more regional variants. It seems possible that some of these industries, in particular that called the Lupemban and located in the more woodland areas surrounding the equatorial forest, may have evolved out of a late and developed Sangoan. Some of the Sangoan forms survive in the shape of picks and even an occasional biface, but the tendency is for tools to become smaller and to be more skilfully made by a better bifacial technique. In the area south of the Zaïre forest true axes appear for the first time, made by detaching flakes from both sides of a parent core, and therefore sometimes called core-axes; other forms of small axes and chisels were also made suggesting a development of wood-working techniques. Lanceolate points of very fine workmanship appear and it is difficult to resist the belief that these were hafted and used as spears. Another new technique of stone-working also became current at this time, which had begun earlier in Europe and north-east Africa, whereby the core was carefully prepared to shape, ready to receive one final, decisive blow in order to detach a flake or blade of predetermined form or character.

In West Africa, industries belonging to the Middle Stone Age have been identified with much less certainty. Rare specimens of Lupemban type have been claimed for Ghana and some found on the surface near Afikpo in eastern Nigeria appear to belong to this category, but none have been found which give satisfactory stratigraphical indication of their date. On the Jos Plateau and in the Lirue Hills to the north of it, considerable collections of material characterized by the 'facetted butts' of the prepared core technique have been found in gravels worked for tin and have been classified as belonging to the Middle Stone Age. In the tin-workings of the Nok valley, to the west of the Jos Plateau such artifacts are stratified between the basan gravels containing Acheulian tools and the later deposits containing Nok style terracottas. This group of artifacts does not have affinities with the Lupemban industrial complex, but rather with 'Middle Palaeolithic' industries of northern Africa of generalized 'Mousteroid' type, and probably belonging to a more open-savanna way of life. There is a radiocarbon date from a piece of wood from the deposits at Zenebi in northern Nigeria, one of the alluvial sites producing Mousteroid material, of  $3485 \pm 110$  B.C.,



but the precise position of this piece of wood in relation to the stone artifacts is unrecorded, and the date is a good deal younger than would be expected for an industry of this type.

Whereas we do not know anything about the physical characteristics of Sangoan man, Middle Stone Age man either qualified as *Homo sapiens* or was not far off it. The subspecies known as *Homo sapiens rhodensis* from Broken Hill, in Zambia, was associated with a Middle Stone Age industry, but there are no skeletal remains dated to this period from West Africa.

### The Late Stone Age

Over most of Africa, the Late Stone Age is characterized by the development of very small stone tools, called for that reason 'microliths'. These are tiny pieces carefully trimmed to be slotted into arrowshafts to form points and barbs, and to make other kinds of composite implements. They demonstrate that their makers were possessors of the bow and that hunting formed an important part of the economy. Compared with the earlier parts of the Stone Age, the pace of cultural change was now quickening, although it remained very slow compared to modern times. There are more regional variations, as the continent's population increased, and as increasing control over environment resulted in even more specific adaptations to different ecological niches.

In large parts of West Africa a microlithic continuum underlies and precedes the techniques of making pottery and ground stone axes, which appear to be grafted onto the microlithic tradition rather than to replace it. The rock shelters at Rop, on the Jos Plateau, and at Iwo Eleru in the Ondo State, have provided microlithic levels without pottery and ground stone axes stratified below microlithic levels which do have them. In Iwo Eleru a radiocarbon date of 9250 B.C.  $\pm$  200 has been obtained from near the base of the lower level, and the transition to the upper seems to be a little after 3000 B.C. At Mejiro Cave, Old Oyo, a microlithic industry was recovered which had no associated pottery or ground stone axes, but the sample was small and it is undated. The long-lasting microlithic continuum doubtless represents a stable adaptation to a hunting and gathering type of existence in the savanna, and the later additions of pottery and ground stone axes are witnesses to the influence of pastoralists moving southwards out of the Sahara, as it became increasingly desiccated; they were probably responsible for introducing the Ndama and West African Dwarf Shorthorn cattle into West Africa; these were humpless cattle which acquired some immunity to trypanosomiasis.

Along the northern margins of West Africa, in the sahel zone immediately south of the Sahara Desert, there was a somewhat different situation in the later part of the Late Stone Age, with ecological adaptations evidenced in the material culture. North of Gao, cattle pastoralists lived on mounds above the level of the seasonal streams between 2000 B.C. and 15,000 B.C. and had pottery and a lithic equipment which included ground stone axes, Sahara type arrowheads and an occasional microlith; fishing contributed importantly to the economy. A somewhat similar situation obtained at Kursakata by 1000 B.C., and a little later at Daima, both in north-eastern Nigeria; here cattle-keepers were probably also growing guinea corn (sorghum) on the fertile clay lands left behind the shrunken Lake Chad. They had pottery but they lived in a stoneless area and had to travel over 50 km. in opposite directions to find the stone

suitable respectively for ground stone axes and grinding stones for food preparation; they had a prolific bone industry, including beautifully made barbed projectile points, but no small stone implements of any kind. They made small fired clay models of animals, some of which depict humpless cattle. They buried their dead in and around the settlement in a crouched position.

On the edge of the forest area in south-eastern Nigeria, at Afikpo, a stratified deposit excavated from a rock-shelter contained pottery, ground stone axes and a stone industry without microliths; a series of radiocarbon dates gives the occupation as beginning about 3000 B.C. and lasting three thousand years. In Fernando Po four main stages of a Late Stone Age complex have been recognized, with pottery and ground stone axes but no microliths; a radiocarbon date in the 6th century A.D. was obtained for the earliest stage, which, if correct, puts the sequence very late; the waisted form of the axes shows affinities with similar ones from south-eastern Nigeria, Cameroun and the Republic of Chad.

### **The Late Stone Age Population**

Skeletal remains have to be reasonably well preserved, in order to determine their racial characteristics, and because of the range of variation that occurs within any ethnic group it is desirable to have a series of skeletons rather than an isolated specimen upon which to make judgements. The remains of 58 individuals from 30 Late Stone Age sites in the Sahara, where bone tends to be better preserved than in Nigeria, only yielded 8 sufficiently well preserved for their racial characteristics to be pronounced upon: 5 were negroids, 1 was of 'mediterranean' type, 2 were mixed type. It does seem that these cattle pastoralists of the southern Sahara were predominantly negroid. When they moved southwards, from some time in the 3rd millennium B.C. onwards, they encountered 'microlithic' hunters in the savanna lands. We only have one skeleton of this group, from Iwo Eleru in Ondo State, and it is dated to the beginning of the 9th millennium B.C. It is definitely negroid in character, although showing certain differences from modern negro groups. It seems that the newcomers from the north moved out of an area where flint was available into an area where arrow points and barbs had traditionally been made of quartz or some other stone in which it is more difficult to make the Saharan type of bifacially flaked arrowhead. So for the most part they seem to have adopted the microlithic technique of the indigenes for tipping and barbing arrows, as they saw it was just as effective. Perhaps this indicates that the incoming population was usually absorbed among those already living in Nigeria. Being both negroid stocks, in a few generations they probably became more and more indistinguishable.

Unfortunately, neither stone tools nor skeletons tell us what language was spoken by their original owners. This is one of the difficulties of Archaeology when dealing with pre-literate populations; it can be very dangerous to jump to conclusions about racial stocks and linguistic groups on the basis of material remains alone, or to identify languages or ethnic groups with certain assemblages of artifacts. If a future archaeologist excavated a house on the campus of a Nigerian university, it might be very hard to tell from his findings whether it had been occupied by people with black skins or white skins, or whether the occupants' first language had been Yoruba or Igbo; it might be easier to tell whether they had been Muslim or Christian. It looks as if the

Late Stone Age (Neolithic) populations of the Sahara and the Nile valley spoke languages either of the Afro-Asiatic group (which includes ancient Egyptian, Berber and Chadic languages such as Hausa, Angas and Tera) or of the Nilo-Saharan group (which includes Songhai, Kanuri, Nubian and the Nilotic languages), while the 'microlithic' hunter/gatherers of the Nigerian savanna spoke languages of the Niger-Congo group (which includes the majority of Nigerian languages). If this is a correct picture, then we have to suppose that small groups of the immigrant pastoralists may have lost their own languages and adopted the prevailing Niger-Congo language of the indigenous population. Only large groups such as the ancestors of the Songhai would have retained their own language. Oral traditions do not have sufficient time-depth to help us much with this question. Another possibility is that the area of Niger-Congo languages extended much further north in Late Stone Age (Neolithic) times and that the ancestors of speakers of Benue-Congo (which includes Kambari, Dakakari, Jaba, Biron, Jukun, Tiv, Efik, Ibibio, Mambila) and Adamawa-Eastern (which includes Chamba, Vere, Mumuye) may have originally moved south into Nigeria from further north. The origin of the Fulani is instructive: they were in the first instance a fairly typical negroid people in the valley of the middle Senegal practising agriculture. They were infiltrated from the north by cattle-keeping Berber groups whose ancestors have been identified by some authorities with pastoralists shown on rock paintings in the Sahara. The infiltration process was probably a gradual one lasting many centuries, as a result of which the pastoralists established a valuable exchange relationship with the politically more advanced Fulani whose language (belonging to the West Atlantic section of Niger-Congo) they in the end adopted. Over the centuries the Cattle Fulani spread along the whole of the savanna strip of West Africa occupying as nomadic pastoralists a special ecological niche complementary to that of the agriculturists.

They fact that the Niger-Congo languages of West Africa have some affinity with the group of Kordofanian languages that at some distant point in the past—perhaps at the beginning of the Late Stone Age—means that there was an intercommunicating population of hunters and gatherers in the savanna between the Senegal and the Nile. The Kordofanians became separated from the Niger-Congo peoples by speakers of Nilo-Saharan, and perhaps later, by Afro-Asiatic speakers. As population increased in West Africa, so the Niger-Congo languages crystallized out roughly into their present geographical distributions, only modified by later ethnic movements (such as that of that of the Fulani, mentioned above). The coming of agriculture, with its increasing sedentism, would have intensified the separation of the language groups we know today. These, with some exceptions, have probably occupied approximately their present areas for the last two thousand years, and in some cases longer. A little more than two thousand years ago there seems to have been an explosive movement of Bantoid peoples from Cameroun and the eastern savanna area of Nigeria into the present Bantu-speaking areas of Africa. The movement of the Tiv in the opposite direction into their present territory may be a last ripple of this great movement, which was still going on in southern Africa well into the nineteenth century.

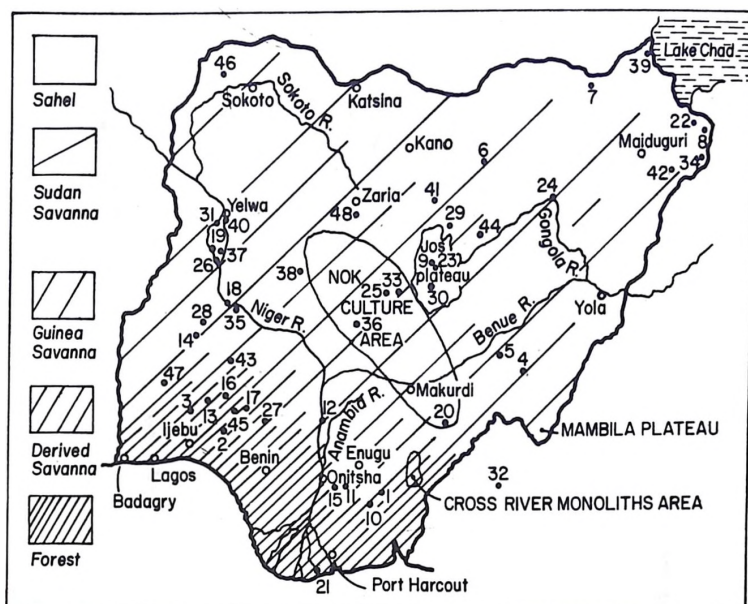
### **Food production**

The change from dependence on hunting, fishing and gathering the fruits of the wild, to crop-raising and stock-keeping, is the most important step which man has taken in



the last ten thousand years. It was spread over a long period of time but it was nevertheless a revolutionary step, in as much as it fundamentally changed man's way of life and brought with it momentous consequences. It not only radically advanced man's capacity for controlling his environment, but it set up the conditions necessary for the emergence of what we call 'civilization'. It made sedentary life possible as never before, the storage of food, the accumulation of wealth, and an increase in population; it led to division of labour, social stratification and new forms of social control. This revolution did not take place in a single location and spread thence to the rest of the world, but the number of 'foci' where such developments evolved was limited. For Europe, western Asia and north-east Africa, the focus of importance was in the hill country of Anatolia, Iran and northern Iraq. Here were developed the cultivation of wheat and barley and the domestication of sheep, goats and cattle. Later, the techniques of food production were applied to the great river valleys of the Tigris/Euphrates, Nile and Indus, with the added techniques of drainage and irrigation. By the fifth millennium B.C. there were domesticated sheep and cattle in Egypt and cereals were being grown. The difficulty of starting up cereal agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of example from the Nile valley is that the crops anciently grown there, wheat and barley, are 'winter rainfall' crops which can only be grown with difficulty south of the Inter-Tropical Front in the 'summer rainfall' area. What was necessary here was the domestication of suitable indigenous wild grasses, which gave rise to the African cultivated millets; the most important of these was Guinea corn (*Sorghum bicolor*), which was domesticated by the middle of the second millennium B.C. in the area between the Sahara Desert and the savanna, between the Nile and Lake Chad. Other wild grasses were domesticated to become pearl millet and finger millet. African rice was domesticated in the area of the inland delta of the Niger. In the stratified Late Stone Age site of Iwo Eleru in Ondo State certain chalcedony implements of trapezoid form first make their appearance around 2000 B.C. These have gloss on their edges, making them resemble closely the 'sickle flints' of the Near East, which were slotted into a bone or wooden handle to make a reaping knife used in the harvesting of wheat and barley. Whether the Iwo Eleru trapezoids had a similar function and were used in cereal agriculture, it is impossible to say for certain; and if they were so used, what was the crop? In the moister zones of West Africa the important staple was the yam, of which more than one African variety was domesticated; although this may have taken place as long as five thousand years ago, we do not have actual archaeological or botanical evidence for this time-depth. A long history of yam cultivation, combined with the benefit of the complementary food values from the nuts obtained from protected or tended oil palms (together, of course, with some meat and fish), would help to account for the density of population in southern Nigeria.

The natural habitat of yams and oil palms is neither the open savanna nor the rain forest. Neither yams nor oil palms can grow under a dense canopy of shading trees; yams cannot stand too strong sun when young, yet, being vines, need small trees to climb up; oil palms need plenty of moisture at their roots. Thus the natural habitat for yams and oil palms is in gallery forests and the northern forest margins. It is likely that they were first domesticated in these areas but that later population pressure caused people to move into the forest, where man-made clearings provided optimum growing



Map of Nigeria, showing vegetation belts, the areas of distribution of the Nok Culture and the Cross River monoliths, and a selection of places of archaeological significance.

- |                    |                  |                   |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Afikpo           | 17 Iwo Eleru     | 33 Samur'i Dukiya |
| 2 Apomu            | 18 Jebba         | 34 Shilma         |
| 3 Asejire          | 19 Kagogi        | 35 Tada           |
| 4 Beli             | 20 Katsina Ala   | 36 Taruga         |
| 5 Biepi            | 21 Ke            | 37 Warra          |
| 6 Birnin Kudu      | 22 Kursakata     | 38 Wushishi       |
| 7 Birnin Gazargamu | 23 Mai Idon Toro | 39 Yau            |
| 8 Daima            | 24 Ngalda        | 40 Yelwa          |
| 9 Dutsen Kongba    | 25 Nok           | 41 Zenebi         |
| 10 Etiti Ulu       | 26 Old Bussa     | 42 Bama           |
| 11 Ezira           | 27 Owo           | 43 Esie           |
| 12 Idah            | 28 Oyo Ile       | 44 Geji           |
| 13 Ife             | 29 Pingell       | 45 Igbara Oke     |
| 14 Igbetti         | 30 Rop           | 46 Leka           |
| 15 Igbo-Ukwu       | 31 RS 63/32      | 47 Odo Ogun       |
| 16 Ilesha          | 32 Sabga         | 48 Turunku        |



conditions. Botanists say that, whatever oil palms are found in the forest zone, it indicates former activity. Large parts of the forest in south-eastern Nigeria have been converted into 'oil palm bush'.

The introduction into West Africa of the ancestors of the Ndama and West African Shorthorn breeds of cattle by Late Stone Age pastoralists moving southwards out of the Sahara has already been mentioned; the 'humped' cattle arrived later, but dwarf goats, and possibly sheep, were probably introduced to West Africa about the same time as the first cattle; pigs may have been a later introduction. We have no evidence for the domestication of any indigenous creature in West Africa except the guinea fowl.

The development of food production by itself, while a prerequisite for urbanization, does not automatically lead to the growth of towns and cities. It seems that certain other circumstances have to be present such as a build-up to a certain level of population pressure and a shortage of agricultural land. In sub-Saharan Africa, the incidence of malaria increased and spread as a result of agricultural clearing and the presence of larger settled communities, so that the increase in population following the adoption of agriculture was slower than it otherwise might have been; and in most areas of sub-Sahara Africa there was not at the time a shortage of agricultural land. Nevertheless, a sufficient agricultural base had been established by the first millenium A.D. to support such ancient states as the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, the Hausa states, Old Oyo, Benin, Asante and Kanem-Borno. The importance of this well-established agricultural foundation for state formation cannot be overemphasized.

### **The Coming of Metal**

In Africa archaeologists are accustomed to divide the Stone Age from the Iron Age because the appearance of iron in their assemblages of artifacts makes an obvious change in the technology, and this makes a convenient basis for a division of their material. Yet it is likely that a convenient basis for a division of their material. Yet it is likely that the coming of iron at first made little difference to the people of Nigeria, since we at present have no evidence that it implies a large-scale movement of people; the way of life, combining hunting and fishing with agriculture and the keeping of livestock, was little affected at first by the possession of a few iron tools or weapons. Only as a knowledge of iron-melting became more widespread and iron cheaper and commoner did it really have an appreciable effect, most importantly in a greater capacity for bush and forest clearing for agriculture. At the one scientifically excavated site in Nigeria where, on the same spot, it is possible to see the Iron Age succeeding the Stone Age, the introduction of iron does not seem to mark a radical change in the total culture, since many elements show continuity.

In making divisions in the Iron Age in West Africa, archaeologists and historians sometimes speak of 'the mediaeval period' (i.e., the period synchronous with the Middle Ages of Europe), 'the protohistoric period' and 'the historic period.' These terms are unsatisfactory: West Africa had no 'Middle Ages', and 'mediaeval' is not only an inappropriate application to a totally different area of a term derived from the peculiar history of another, but also imposes on West Africa a misleading picture of her cultural development. It is convenient to have divisions in the West African Iron Age, but names for these should be meaningful. One needs to distinguish (i) the period



before the impact of the Islamic world (ii) the period of predominantly Arab/Islamic contact along the northern part of West Africa (iii) the period of coastal European contact (iv) the period of European inland penetration. Therefore the following divisions of the Iron Age in Nigeria are proposed:

1. Early Contact Period: c. 400 B.C. — A.D. 700
2. Northern Contact Period: c. A.D. 700 — A.D. 1475
3. Southern Contact Period: c. A.D. 1475 — A.D. 1850
4. Inland Contact Period: after A.D. 1850

In south-west Asia, Egypt and Europe, the first metals used for tools and weapons were copper, and copper alloyed with tin, which is bronze; hence in these areas the interposition of a 'Bronze Age' between the 'Stone Age' and the 'Iron Age'; the civilization of Dynastic Egypt belonged to the Bronze Age. Nigeria was not touched by the Bronze Age. Why was this, and why did ancient Egyptian civilization not affect Nigeria more? The reasons are partly to do with the fact that the third millennium B.C., which was the time when metallurgy, writing, monumental building in stone, the use of the wheel, and centralized government became firmly established in Egypt, was also the millennium of the final desiccation of the Sahara; people were accordingly moving out of the Sahara and it could no longer serve as an indirect link between Egypt and Nigeria; the link was not re-established until this was achieved with the help of the camel some three thousand years later. Other reasons for the comparative lack of influence from the Bronze Age civilization of Ancient Egypt are connected with the later and slower build-up of an agricultural economy in Nigeria.

Just as the Roman poet, Virgil, tried to give lustre to the origins of upstart Rome by fictitiously tracing it to the ancient kingdom of Troy, since this was more prestigious than being content with an indigenous origin, so a number of writers on West Africa have sought to give dignity and lustre to the cultural history of West Africa by trying to show connections with ancient Egypt, thus enabling West Africa to bask in the reflected glory of that civilization. Such writers have usually lacked a sense of chronology and have gaily skipped over the difficulties of positing connections between ancient Egyptian civilization and communities lacking a knowledge of metals and whose agricultural economy, if it existed at all, was only recently established. The arguments put forward for close cultural connections with Egypt have been linguistic, anthropological and in the realm of religious ideas; oral traditions cannot penetrate such a time depth, and a sound body of archaeological evidence for such connections simply does not exist. Linguists have now demolished the etymological arguments, and experts in the realms of anthropology and of religious ideas have shown that the similarities which exist can be explained on the basis of convergence or a common substratum, and they can point to such similarities in other parts of the world. There is no evidence to support the idea that Nigeria was in any sense 'colonized' from Ancient Egypt.

Furthermore, there is no need for Nigeria to seek to gain credit by demonstrating prestigious connections with ancient Egypt. The desire to gain some reflected glory from the splendour of ancient Egypt is almost a tacit admission that ancient Nigerian culture is lacking. It is not true that Nigerian culture is lacking: Nigeria has a great deal of artists and scholars in all parts of the world; fabulous prices are paid for Nigerian works of art in the Western world. Nigeria possesses her own glories and needs no borrowed light from other cultures.

### Early Contact Period: c. 400 — A.D. 700

Throughout this period there would have been many parts of Nigeria which had no contacts with the outside world, and in most cases such contacts as there were between West Africa and the classical world of the Mediterranean were slender, sporadic and indirect. Much has been made of Hanno's supposed voyage but the account is probably a forgery. On the other hand, Herodotus' account of the Carthaginians' 'silent trade' for West African gold is almost certainly based on fact. At any rate there must have been some reason for contact with the outside world, since it was at the beginning of this period that a knowledge of iron reached Nigeria. This was not just an importation of iron objects but a knowledge of iron manufacture which, since there was no previous metallurgy at all is most unlikely to have been an independent invention. At Taruga, about 35 km. south-east of Abuja in central Nigeria, a number of iron-smelting furnaces have been excavated which have produced radiocarbon dates from the fifth to the third centuries B.C. Excavations in occupation mounds carried out as part of the rescue archaeology conducted in the area now flooded by the Kainji Dam on the River Niger, indicated the presence of iron in this area by the second century B.C.

It has frequently been suggested that a knowledge of iron metallurgy reached Nigeria from Meroe in the Republic of Sudan. Meroe was the later capital of the ancient negro kingdom of Kush, and it came to an end in the middle of the fourth century A.D., reputedly destroyed by the rising power of Axum. Meroe was clearly an important industrial centre for the manufacture of iron, as great piles of slag are still visible there today.

It had been supposed that after the destruction of Meroe, refugees from there had drifted westwards along the sahel strip south of the desert, bringing with them a knowledge of metallurgy. In view of the dates now obtained for the Taruga iron-smelting furnaces, this obviously no longer fits, and if Meroe was the point of origin of a knowledge of iron working for West Africa, the connection must have been much nearer the beginning of Meroe's own iron-smelting activities. However, there is another route by which iron technology could have reached Nigeria consistent with the Taruga dates and which now seems the more likely.

Carthage was founded towards the end of the ninth century B.C. by Phoenicians, among whom the use of iron was common earlier than in Egypt or at Meroe. Carthaginian influence became strong on the north African coast, especially along the Gulf of Gabes. Inland from here there was a powerful tribe called the Garamantes, whom Herodotus describes as drivers of horse-drawn chariots. There is a series of rock-engravings which stretches in a south-westerly direction from the Garamanian homeland in the Fezzan across the Sahara Desert to a point within 200 km. from the River Niger at Gao. From Gao the river forms a natural route southwards into Nigeria.

The iron-smelting sites of Taruga were associated with terracotta figurines of the distinctive artistic style named after the Nigerian village of Nok where they were first discovered. Nok culture was first known as a result of the recovery of archaeological remains from the tin-bearing gravels west of the Jos Plateau in the course of mining operations. These remains consisted of ground stone axes and smaller stone tools, iron axes and other iron tools, the baked clay draught pipe used in iron-smelting, quartz lip-plugs and other ornaments, and above all the striking terracottas. These most



commonly consist of the more solid and resistant heads of whole figures, since the heads remain intact in the damaging conditions of being rolled around in alluvial deposits while the more fragile bodies get broken up; thus there are other fragments of the latter. The style of the Nok terracottas, although not uniform, represents remarkable artistic achievement, and has been admired throughout the world; the portrayal of the eye as a triangle, with the pupil indicated by a pierced hole, is very characteristic. Nok style finds have been made in an elongated area nearly 500 km long to the west and south of the Jos Plateau. Some art historians have seen in them the ancestry of certain forms of the Yoruba art of a thousand years later 600 km. to the south-west. We do not know the function of these baked clay images, but they may have belonged to riverside shrines connected with agricultural practices. When sudden floods came in the rainy season, they got washed into the gravels the river was laying down. It was originally suggested, by analogy with what was then thought to be the case for East Africa, that the gravels represented a wet period around 500 B.C. There is no independent evidence in Nigeria for such a wet phase, and the deposition of the latest gravels in the Nok series, in which the figurines are found, may have been due rather to intensive agriculture and tree-removal, to provide fuel for iron-smelting, on the slopes bordering the valley, thus leading to the rapid erosion which provided the material of the gravels. However that may be, subsequent radiocarbon dates have indicated that the original estimate of age was not far out. A radiocarbon date of A.D. 200  $\pm$  50 from clay overlying the figurine layer gives a *terminus ante quem*; a date of 925 B.C.  $\pm$  70 from carbonized wood actually in the figurine layer may be no more indicative of the actual date than those of 2110 B.C.  $\pm$  140 and 3625 B.C.  $\pm$  65, since they may all be older wood which had been sludged into the gravels at a later date. However, more precise time-brackets are provided by the Taruga radiocarbon dates (fifth to third centuries B.C.), by one from a Nok occupation site (third century B.C.) and by a thermoluminescent date on one of the terracottas of 620  $\pm$  230. Thus it is best to think of the Nok culture as belonging to the last half of the last millennium B.C.

When the only finds known of the Nok culture came from alluvial tin works and these included artifacts of both stone and iron, it was supposed that the period represented a time of change and overlap between the use of stone and iron. Since no stone implements were found at Taruga at all, and only one stone axe at the occupation site referred to above, it seems likely that the Nok culture was a fully iron-using one, and that the stone implements in the gravels were older but were lying around from a previous occupation and so became incorporated in the gravels by the floods. We have no skeletal remains of Nok people and of course we do not know what language they spoke, but the hair style on some of the terracotta heads resembles that of the Jaba who live in the area to this day.

At the settlement mound of Daima, in north-western Borno south of Lake Chad, soon after the first appearance of iron in the middle of the first millennium A.D., the people began to build circular huts of mud which had floors made of potsherd pavements. Such pavements can be made either by laying sherds of pottery flat on the earth floor, as is still done today among the Nupe, or by pressing them in edgeways, as was done at Daima. The making of fired clay models persisted from Stone Age times, and towards the end of the occupation in the early part of the second millennium A.D. included a humped cow, sheep or goats, wild animals and human beings. Actual carbonized grains of Guinea corn were found, the oldest direct evidence of agriculture



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

*Terracotta Heads of the Nok Culture*

IGBO-UKWU BRONZE



*The Bronze Roped Pot (height: 32.3 cm.)*

in West Africa. The pottery included the enormous storage jars known locally as 'Sao pots', which were sometimes used for burials, but not at Daima, where the burial tradition remained as it had been during the Stone Age occupation. According to oral tradition, the 'Sao' were an indigenous race of giants, but it is possible that this is really a generalized title to describe the non-Muslim peoples of Borno, as it was applied to the pre-Kanuri people of the Yobe valley also, but who have been found by excavation of their settlement mounds to have a different culture from the people of Daima and Kursakata and the other numerous people living on the fertile clay lands south of Lake Chad. Both survived until the Muslim Kanuri began to move west from Kanem in the fourteenth/fifteenth century A.D.

The legend of Kisra, the magician king who is supposed to have come to Nigeria from Persia or Arabia, has been interpreted as indicating a great migration of peoples from east to west across the Sudan during the seventh century A.D. At present there is no archaeological evidence confirming such a migration, and the stories are much more likely to be the work of Muslim propaganda, or at best an indication of an immigrant ruling family only.

#### Northern Contact Period: c. A.D. 700-1475

Now for the first time we move into a period of Nigerian history when long-distance trade, however indirect, begins to play an increasingly important role in powerfully influencing not only economic but social and political patterns as well. Trade brought wealth to certain parts of West Africa, and this helped to provide the basis for social stratification and state formation. Now also we are no longer entirely dependent on archaeological information but begin in addition to get Arab historical records. These give us accounts of the importance of Ghana 'the land of gold', grown rich and powerful as the middleman between the gold-producing areas of West Africa and the Islamic world; to be succeeded in this role by the kingdom of Mali. Archaeologists have excavated at Koumbi Saleh, in southern Mauritania, which may have been the commercial rather than the royal capital of Ghana. The nearby trading city of Auodaghost has almost certainly been identified at Tegdaoust, and archaeologists have been excavating at Niani, in the extreme north of the Republic of Guinea near the border with the Republic of Mali, and believe this was the capital of ancient Mali.

Further to the east in West Africa, there was nowhere so directly engaged in trading into the Islamic world as the towns and states of the western sahel zone, sitting athwart the gold routes. In northern Nigeria the beginnings of the commercial connections and importance of such cities as Katsina, Kano and Zaria, as well as the origins of the Hausa states, are yet to have the light of archaeological investigation thrown upon them. This is an area of archaeological research in which nothing has been done, and one in urgent need of attention.

More work also needs to be done at the 'fire-brick' sites in the Lake Chad area, the most important of which in Nigeria is Birnin Gazargamu. In the centre of this now deserted walled town, once the Kanuri capital, are the remains of a brick palace built about the time of Mai Idris Alooma who reigned during the latter part of the sixteenth century. A refuse mound outside the palace walls has been excavated and from a point half-way through its formation there is a radiocarbon date of A.D. 1620  $\pm$  105.

The vigour of indigenous African cultures can be seen during this period from the upper layers of the mound at Daima in north-eastern Borno. Here we can see new



materials and new imports being added to the traditional culture; this applies particularly to objects of copper and bronze and the techniques of making them. The ramifications of trading reached even further south, for which the most striking evidence so far comes from Igbo-Ukwu in the Anambra State, some 40 km. south-east of Onitsha. Here an accidental discovery unearthed a number of bronze objects which remained somewhat mysterious until excavations were conducted at the find-spot, and at two adjacent sites which were also discovered.

### **Igbo-Ukwu**

At the original site further bronzes were found, and it was possible to see that they had been laid out in a rectangular area. There was evidence that some of the vessels had been wrapped in cloth. In addition to the bronzes there were a number of complete pots decorated in a highly ornamented style characterized by deep channelling and the use of projecting bosses. There was a large number of beads, mostly of coloured glass, but some of carnelian; many were still lying in rows in the ground as originally strung, although the strings on which they had been threaded had perished.

The nature of the bronzes was strongly suggestive of sacred vessels used for some ceremonial or ritual purpose and of ornaments and regalia for some important person or persons connected with this. The way these objects were disposed in the ground did not suggest a hurried burial in a pit; they were spread out in a concentration over a level rectangular area, and at a remarkably shallow depth below the surface of the ground. They were probably housed in a small shrine-storehouse with a light roof of thatch, similar to the modern *Igbo obu* or *obi*. Its abandonment might indicate a raid or some disaster in warfare, or just a decision of the community to move elsewhere for whatever reason, intentionally leaving these objects behind.

Not far away a burial chamber was discovered whose floor was  $3\frac{1}{2}$  m. below the present surface of the ground. In it some important personage had been buried, propped up on a copper-studded stool in one corner of the wooden-lined chamber, its arms supported on copper brackets; it had been dressed in coronation finery, with a copper crown, a bead-covered headdress, a copper pectoral plate on its chest, fourteen anklets, four wristlets and a pair of bead-inlaid copper armlets, and in one hand fly-switch with a beautifully cast handle portraying a horse and its rider; there was a long-handled fan with feathers mounted in a copper holder, and three elephant tusks. After the burial chamber had been roofed in with planks, the bodies of at least five individuals were placed on top of it—perhaps slaves despatched to accompany their lord in the next world.

At a third site nearby there was a pit two metres in diameter and three metres deep into which had been deposited on a single occasion alternating layers of red sand, rubbish and burnt materials. At the top of the undisturbed part of the pit excavated was a delicate double chain of 200 finelyworked copper wire links. Other objects of copper or bronze included thirty-five wristlets, two small bells, six cylindrical staff ornaments, a long pointed rod, a large jingle ornament and various other miscellaneous pieces. A great quantity of broken pottery had been thrown into the pit, as well as a number of complete vessels, the largest of which was a remarkable example of ceramic art. In form with the characteristic ancient Igbo-Ukwu style of deep channelling and projecting bosses; it has five large strap-like handles extending from the rim to the shoulder decorated in imitation of basketwork, and between each of these the shoulder of the pot is decorated with models in relief of a snake, a ram's head, another

IGBO-UKWU BRONZE



*Bronze altar showing one of the solid panels decorated with conventionalized spiders overlying a geometric pattern (height 27.5 cm.).*





*Samples of Igbo-Ukwu pottery.*

snake, a chameleon, and a mysterious looking rectangular hatched object, humped in the middle, which might be meant to represent a tortoise. There were traces of burnt and decayed bone, none of which on examination proved to be human, but of which the majority were of duiker or antelope. Probably the best explanation for the contents of this pit is that they represent the intentional disposal of a collection of ritual and ceremonial objects, possibly following the burning down of a shrine-house. This could have been for a number of reasons, such as a 'bad death' or the routine disposal of goods which were the insignia of a man's personal titles and which no one else would be justified in using after his death.

The finds at Igbo-Ukwu are an indication of the concentration of considerable social wealth in terms of the economy of the time. The bronzes are the products of a special craftsman class, using imported raw materials which would have to be paid for by the products of the region, as would also the large number of imported beads. The three elephant tusks in the burial chamber must obviously have been objects of value, as well as having symbolic significance. The finds are probably to be associated with the institution of the *Eze Nri*, the priest king of the Umueri clan of the Igbo. Especially is this so since the sites are quite close to Owerri, which is the only other place besides Aguku, also not far off, to have an *Eze Nri*. The *Eze Nri* is not now a political overlord like, for example, the *Oba* of Benin but is rather a spiritual ruler whose authority is nevertheless recognized in moral and religious matters, and in connection with the title-taking system, throughout much of Igboland. The material remains found at Igbo-Ukwu appear to have certain things in common with what is known about the practices associated with the *Eze Nri*, but there are also certain noticeable differences which are perhaps to be accounted for as changes which have come about in the institution during the passage of many centuries. Although apparently without all the apparatus of a 'state', it may formerly have disposed of more political power than it has recently, although Igbo social structure never seems to have led to urbanization and the creation of cities.

Some of the wood from the stool in the burial chamber yielded a radiocarbon date of A.D.  $850 \pm 120$ ; three samples of charcoal from the disposal pit gave radiocarbon dates of A.D.  $840 \pm 110$ , A.D.  $840 \pm 145$  and A.D.  $1445 \pm 70$ ; charcoal from another nearby pit containing ancient Igbo-Ukwu style pottery gave a date of A.D.  $875 \pm 130$ . There is thus a striking congruence of four of these dates in the ninth century A.D., and one 'odd man out' in the fifteenth. In view of the nature of radiocarbon dating, it would seem reasonable to discontinue the last date and place considerable reliance on the other four. Even if one supposes that the wood in the stool was already 200 years old when it was buried, we still arrive at a date two hundred years before European voyagers arrived on the coast of Nigeria. The lost wax method of casting is elegant in the basic simplicity of the idea that demanding a high level of skill in the actual details of the technique if a perfect casting is to result. The principle is to make a model in wax of the object you require in bronze, cover it with a clay 'investment', heat it to make the wax run out and bake the clay into a mould which has taken the imprint of the wax model, pour the molten metal into the space left by the wax, let it cool, break off the clay mould. It will be seen that in this process every casting must be unique, as a fresh mould is made each time. The above description requires little modification for the casting of solid objects, mostly confined to small

pieces except of course that a rod of wax has to be added to the wax model, the end of which must not be covered over by the clay investment; the resulting tube in the clay, after the melting out of the wax, serves as a funnel for pouring in the molten metal. In the case of larger objects, which need to be hollow cast, the process is more complicated, as a clay core has to be fixed in a position to make the hollow in the interior of the casting. This is done by making the core first, roughly the shape of the desired object but a little smaller, covering it in wax and carving upon this the details of the object to be cast, inserting metal pins through the wax into the core and leaving them projecting so that they become incorporated in the outside clay investment; after, the melting out these pins then serve to hold the core in position. It may also be necessary to add additional rods to the clay model, to form tubes rising to the top of the investment through which air, steam and gases can escape when the molten metal is poured into the space between the core and the outer casing.

The nearest sources of copper to Nigeria are at Azelik in the Ahir region of the Republic of Niger; there are also sources at Nioro in Mali and at Akjoujt in Mauritania. Arab writers from the 10th century A.D. onwards record a southward export of copper from Islamic North Africa.

### **Bronze-Casting**

The style of the Igbo-Ukwu bronzes is unlike that of either Ife or Benin, yet it is essentially African in character. There is no doubt that if not actually made on the spot, they were made not very far away from Igbo-Ukwu. Yet the metal of which they are made must have been imported, since copper does not occur in Nigeria; and although the Igbo-Ukwu bronzes are in a developed and indigenous art style, the technique by which they were made was the *cire perdue*, or 'lost wax', method of casting, and this technique is likely to have been imported from the Islamic world. As the long-range trade across the Sahara developed, which would have included brass and copper bowls, pans and utensils, so it is likely that in the centres of commercial exchange in the northern parts of West Africa, just as there were communities of northern merchants, so there may have been craftsmen who originally learnt their trade north of the Sahara; one of their functions may have been to repair the metal parts of camel harness. From such artisans the craft was soon learnt by West Africans, and the technique of 'lost wax' casting was applied in making a number of objects previously made in other, more perishable, materials. Some of the Igbo-Ukwu castings are clearly in imitation of objects before made in wood, leather and calabash. The marriage of an imported technique to indigenous artistic genius and skill provided the breeding ground of Nigeria's ancient treasures in bronze.

Archaeological testimony to this trade in copper and copper alloys comes from the wreck of a caravan discovered in the Mauritanian desert carrying over 2000 brass rods, and radiocarbon dated to the twelfth century. Thus there is ample evidence, from both historical and archaeological sources, to account for the kind of long-distance trade which must have supplied the material for the sophisticated bronze castings of Igbo-Ukwu at the kind of early date indicated by the radiocarbon age determinations.

Of considerable interest are the analyses of the objects from Igbo-Ukwu. These have shown that the lost wax castings are made of a leaded bronze, that is, of an alloy of copper and tin with a considerable quantity of lead; this is a different composition

from that of the Benin 'bronzes' which in fact are nearly all made of brass, being an alloy of copper and zinc. Of further interest is the fact that the objects from Igbo-Ukwu made by smelting, chasing and hammering were made of almost pure copper, while leaded bronze was used for cast objects. Now copper is easier to work by smelting and chasing than is bronze, whereas leaded bronze is much easier to cast. This suggests a much greater knowledge of metallurgy on the part of the ancient craftsmen than they have hitherto been credited with, it being said that they melted down whatever 'yellow metal' came to hand. Although tin, lead and zinc occur in Nigeria, there is reason to believe that the alloying was not done locally, but that 'casting alloys' were imported as well as pure copper.

Copper was undoubtedly not the only import into Nigeria in this period, although the one which provides the best archaeological evidence; salt was another import, as well as textiles, horses and glass beads of which there was also evidence at Igbo-Ukwu. Gold was the original stimulus for all this trade between North and West Africa, and the principal export in return; but gold only comes from the western part of West Africa, and other exports are likely to have been ivory, kola nuts and slaves. The earliest route from Egypt to obtain West African gold went past Wanyanga and Lake Chad; after the end of the ninth century A.D. a more westerly route from North Africa was developed.

### Ife

The forest area of south-western Nigeria also had the economic potential to gain wealth from its exports, with the result that it developed centralized institutions which concentrated social wealth; it was thus able to afford luxury goods made out of the expensive imported metals of copper and brass.

It is assumed that before the middle of the first millennium A.D. the forest area of western Nigeria was inhabited by a fairly extensive Yorubaspeaking population living in agricultural settlements, using and manufacturing their own iron. There are five radiocarbon dates covering the period of the sixth to the tenth centuries for charcoal from humanly-dug pits at Orun Oba Ado. The early importance of Ife may have been that it was a centre of ironworking for its area, and it may have become a centre of craft specialization. With the demand of the Islamic world for forest products, the 'pull' of trade towards the north may have been especially felt in the great northward bulge of the forest between the Lower Niger and the Dahomey Gap. In the centre of this bulge lies Ife, well situated to take advantage of this trade, especially if it had some centralized institution, such as that of the *Oni* to levy tolls on the trade and concentrate wealth in the process. This northward bulge of the forest is that nearest to the River Niger, around Jebba, whence the natural route of the river valley led northwards to the ancient trading states of the western Sudan. Later there was an important trade route which crossed this stretch of the river and led northwards to the entrepot cities of the Hausa states. Some such circumstances as these must have led to the early wealth and importance of Ife. Even if there were no oral traditions about Ife, the archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates that there was something unique and special about it. A fair amount of excavation has been carried out in Ife, but far more needs to be done if a real knowledge of the beginnings and development of the town are to be recovered. In view of the archaeological importance of Ife and of Yoruba



pride in it, it is astonishing that the local authorities are permitting building development without prior archaeological investigation.

Yoruba traditions of origin are complex, and have been changed and manipulated for political purposes. On the one hand, there is the tradition that Ife is the centre of the world and that it was at Ife that the earth was created. On the other, that the Yoruba originated from Arabia; this tradition is not traceable before the writings of the Yoruba historian Johnson; he seems to have taken it from Clapperton, who in the 1820s reported the information as voiced by Sultan Bello of Sokoto — for whom it may have been a piece of Muslim propaganda; there are other 'migration' traditions. The 'creation' and 'migration' versions may have reference to distinct indigenous and immigrant populations. There is nothing like enough archaeological evidence yet to throw much light on Yoruba origins; in the present state of knowledge there is no more reason to believe that the Yoruba-speaking people as a whole came from Arabia than that the world was created at Ife. The kingdom of Old Oyo might have received a ruling dynasty from outside, but from no farther away than Borgu.

Perhaps because of its strategic economic situation at the centre of the northern forest bulge, on account of the advantages this gave it in trade to the north, and perhaps also because of ideas about kingship which travelled in the reverse direction, Ife may have been the first place among the scattered Yoruba-speaking agricultural villages of southwestern Nigeria where the institution of kingship emerged. This seems the best explanation for the undoubted archaeological richness and exceptional importance of Ife. Other Yoruba-speaking communities and Benin, adopted the institution of kingship — and validated it by traditions of their having been founded by sons of Oduduwa, the mythical founder of Ife.

Ife is best known for its life-size brass heads executed in a naturalistic style, of which there are a dozen and a half extant examples. None are archaeologically dated, and most were discovered by accident. One dug up by the German ethnographer Frobenius disappeared and a forgery was substituted. We do not know the original use of these life-like brass heads, but holes in the neck look as if they were intended to serve to fix them to some wooden structure; the most plausible suggestion is that the heads were the most important and life-like part of funerary images of chiefs carried in procession at 'second burial' or comparable ceremonies. Just as at Igbo-Ukwu bronze replaced earlier materials, the metal versions may have replaced earlier images carved in wood. Certain it is that there are heads in terracotta, often bearing the same type of vertical facial scarifications, which have been found in Ife in greater numbers than their metal counterparts, and which to some eyes are even more beautiful. Radio-carbon dates in the twelfth century A.D. have been obtained for archaeologically excavated levels in which terracottas have occurred. In addition to human heads, animal and other forms occur, but until recently it was difficult to have any idea about their function, since they had not been recovered in a certainly primary context. It appears to have been the custom at Ife to bury in the ground brass and terracotta sculptures used for rituals and ceremonies and only to resurrect them when required for the appropriate festival or performance. In this way, doubtless, sometimes trace was lost of individual pieces. When accidentally discovered in farming, road-making or house-building, such objects even today become attached to a cult and are incorporated into existing shrines. Thus it was something of a break-through to find

terracotta sculptures at Ife in their original setting instead of in one of those secondary contexts. An excavation at the reputed burial site of a former Oni, Lafogido, revealed a kind of mortuary chapel, in which it appeared that a rectangular potsherd pavement had been laid over the grave and a lightly roofed structure raised over the pavement. Set into the pavement near its edges were a dozen clay waterpots whose lids were surmounted by terracotta sculptures of various animal heads bearing royal emblems, all facing inwards. A radiocarbon date of the twelfth century was associated with this site.

Further light has been thrown on the Ife terracottas by the results of an excavation at Obalara's Land, where a site with potsherd pavements dated to the early fourteenth century not only yielded terracotta heads of 'classical' (i.e., like the brass heads) and other styles, but also a pot decorated in relief with a representation of a shrine, showing both types of heads placed upon it.

Potsherd pavements are a feature of many sites in and around Ife, all of the 'edge-laid' variety like that found in faraway Daima mentioned above; at Ife white quartz stones are also sometimes used with the potsherds to make charming patterns. At the site of Ita Yemoo in Ife a potsherd pavement was overlain with charcoal radiocarbon dated to A.D. 1060  $\pm$  130 and A.D. 1150  $\pm$  200, indicating that such pavements were being made in the period of the eleventh/twelfth centuries. It has been suggested that the inspiration for these potsherd pavements derived ultimately from the tessellated pavements of North Africa and the Mediterranean world. This is a possibility to be borne in mind in relation to long-distance trading contacts across the Sahara as, well as the similar suggestion that the same Mediterranean world, had something to do with the traditional type of Ife and Benin house-plan, in which internal verandahs face inwards onto a small courtyard which receives rain from the roofs but is provided with an underground drain to enable the water to escape. On the other hand, these mud-built 'impluvium' houses of south-western Nigeria may represent a similar but independent solution to the problems of protection from heat and glare in a hot climate.

A hint concerning the importance of the northward trade may lie in the location of the 'Tsoede bronzes'. These are a number of large bronze figures kept at Jebba; Tada and Jiraga — villages on the stretch of the Niger immediately north of the forest bulge. One of these bronzes, a seated figure, is so exactly in the style of the Ife heads that it has been declared to be by the same hand, or at any rate out of the same workshop. No one really knows how these bronzes came to be where they are, but their situation is suggestive of connections to Ife in relation to the points where the northward trade crossed the River Niger. These villages are Nupe and the latter claim that the bronzes were brought up the river from Idah by their founding hero Tsoede, although this tradition has been denied by the Emir of Patigi. If these bronzes were left behind by Yoruba when driven out of the area by the Nupe, what is more natural than that the latter should claim them for their own? Another suggestion is that these bronzes were cast in Old Oyo and were removed by the Nupe after their capture of Old Oyo in the sixteenth century, but in that case one would have expected them to have been taken back to the Nupe capital. At Esie, half-way between Ife and the River Niger, is a remarkable collection of stone figures whose date is quite unknown, but whose location might also be significant in relation to the northern trade.



The Yoruba-speaking groups, although obviously having linguistic connections, do not ever appear to have been a single political entity. Being at the centre of a commercial web did almost certainly assist the idea of kingship to be elaborated at Ife and to lead to control of the surrounding area; but the other Yoruba kingdoms have resisted Ife's efforts to imply a political supremacy. The Yoruba living in the savanna area to the north-west of Ife were in an even stronger position to gain from the trade between the forests and the Middle Niger kingdoms. Thus it was that, while the great flowering of culture in Ife seems to belong to the period from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, after this time Old Oyo had more commercial advantage and political strength. It was in a position to be a middleman between south-western Nigeria and the Islamic world away to the north, rather like the kingdoms of the western Sudan owed their existence to being middleman between the Islamic world and the gold-fields of West Africa. Old Oyo has an earth surrounding it more than 30 km. in length. There is as yet no archaeological dating for it, but historians place the founding of Old Oyo not later than the fourteenth century. Its savanna situation gave Old Oyo another means of exerting political power: horses. These were originally obtained from the north, and because of difficulties of breeding in tsetse infested areas, probably continued to be an important article of import throughout its supremacy. Cavalry are an effective military weapon in savanna country in a way that they are not in the forest, and it was probably the possession of cavalry which helped to extend Old Oyo's influence southwards into the Dahomey Gap, as well as the superior country of the Fulani which helped to bring about the end of Old Oyo in the 19th century, its refugees fleeing south until they found protection at the northern forest's edge. Old Oyo was a savanna kingdom; cavalry played an important part both in its rise and in its fall. Old Oyo was strategically situated to control the river crossings and embarking points of the River Niger trade, but was not itself situated in the river valley; had it been, its horses would probably have been decimated by trypanosomiasis; it was situated on higher, less tsetse infested ground, yet only half a day's ride from the river.

Owo is the most easterly of the Yoruba kingdoms, contiguous with the Edo-speaking peoples controlled by Benin. like the others it shares the tradition of having been founded from Ife, but it has also come under the political and cultural influence of Benin. This is shown in the results of excavations at the Igbo Alaja site in Owo, where there is a potsherd pavement and where terracottas of 'classical' Ife style were found associated with others of Benin style. The earliest radiocarbon date obtained from the site is in the first half of the fifteenth century. More work is needed at Owo to determine more closely the chronological relationships of artistic expressions in the styles of Ife and Benin respectively before it can throw much light on the Ife-Benin relationship.

### **Benin**

In addition to the various Yoruba states, Benin also appears to have derived the institution of kingship from Ife—if that is the correct interpretation of its tradition of origin—and developed it along its own particular lines. Once again, Benin may have initially drawn some of its wealth from being a collecting and toll point for trade in products from a wide area of that part of the forest which ultimately went up the Niger

northwards; this at any rate would seem to be the evidence of the fact that Benin used small white shells as currency before the Europeans arrived on the coast, which Professor Ryder has asserted were cowries and nothing else.

The kind of cowries referred to do not occur on the Guinea coast, but only on the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. There are Arabic records of their use on the Middle Niger from the tenth century A.D., although they are not recorded for the Hausa states and Borno until very much later. It looks, then, as if Benin's trading links were directly up the Niger to Gao and Timbuktoo. The fashion for pink coral in Benin also suggests connections which led, finally, to the mediterranean.

At Benin also it may be that we have an interesting record on the ground of a process of nucleation and state formation. According to oral tradition it was the fifteenth century Oba Ewuare who built the innermost 'city wall'—a dump rampart of earth with a ditch outside, clearly a work of urban defence; from the bottom of the ditch to the top of the rampart is a height of some twenty metres; a calculation has estimated that it would have taken a labour force of 500 men, working ten hours a day for seven days a week, to complete this gigantic task in a single dry season. A much smaller labour force could have completed it over a number of years, but in either case it is indicative of a strongly centralized directive authority. A radiocarbon date of A.D. 1340  $\pm$  105 from charcoal on the old land surface below the rampart gives some confirmation to the traditional date of construction.

However, of perhaps greater interest are the other earthworks around Benin. Since these were noticed crossing the radial roads out of Benin at a number of points, it was formerly assumed that they formed concentric rings of defence around the city, more likely the earthworks around Ife. Two years of careful and laborious tracing through the dense forest undergrowth by a five-man team showed that this was not the case; instead it was found that they formed a complex network of cells, and are more likely to represent the boundaries of the land belonging to different communities; there may have been a process of nucleation and it is to be hoped that further work may date them and throw light on the formation and growth of the Benin State.

Benin is better provided with historical documents of some time depth, both oral and written, than many other parts of Nigeria. It is for historians to argue about these and the vexed question of the connexion, if any, with Ife. Part of the argument is art-historical, depending upon the supposed sequence of art styles in the Benin brasses, and in part on a 19th century tradition that Benin learnt the art of brasscasting from Ife in the 13th or 14th century, as well as the founding story—which are somewhat at variance with the earliest Portuguese accounts. However this matter is eventually settled, it needs to be remembered that there is no archaeological dating for the various styles of Benin bronzes, although we can be confident about the 19th century heads. The only archaeologically dated bronzes of any account from Benin are 49 manillas and bracelets associated with the skeletons of over forty young women thrown into an abandoned well-shaft in the middle of the 13th century; hinged bracelets from a hoard excavated on the Ogba Road cannot be earlier than the 19th century.

It is interesting to compare the metal content of various groups of 'bronzes' in Nigeria. As already mentioned, those from Igbo-Ukwu are of leaded bronze (copper + tin) or of copper; twelve of the Ife heads are heavily leaded brasses (copper + zinc), five are of copper, and one is copper + 1.2% lead and 6.2% tin; the seated figure from Tada is of copper, but five others of the Tsoede group are unleaded bronzes; the

thirteenth century objects from Benin are of bronze but the 19th century excavated objects and the majority of collected objects from Benin which have been analysed are of brass. These differences may relate more to geographical areas and particular trade routes by which raw material for casting was obtained than to particular periods of time. Efforts to identify sources of copper by means of the trace elements have so far been unsuccessful.

The only examples of an edge-set potsherd pavement from Benin appears to date not later than the 13th century. It looks as if at Benin such pavements belong only to this early period, when they were popular at Ife, but subsequently to have gone out of use.

### **Southern Contact Period: c. A.D. 1475—1850**

Although we have characterized the period 1475 to 1850 as the 'Southern Contact Period', it should not therefore be imagined that northern contact ceased, or was diminished suddenly; in some areas, indeed, it increased, and it never completely disappeared. At the beginning of the period northern contacts remained much more important, and it was the period when the Songhai empire took over from Mali the role of middleman between West Africa and the Islamic world. This brought the middleman rather closer to Nigeria, and the rise in importance during this period of Old Oyo is not unconnected with this fact. It is perhaps significant that European voyagers on the coast heard more about Old Oyo and Benin than they did about Ife. Archaeological work in Ghana has revealed much about the new trading patterns to the coast, but comparatively little work on this period has been done in Nigeria. There is one interesting confirmation, however, of the introduction to Nigeria of maize by Europeans, after they themselves had discovered it in the New World. In the making of pots today, maize husks are still used as rollers, or 'roulettes', to roll over the surface of the unfired clay, to consolidate it and make a characteristic pattern. At Ife this pattern is found on pots of sixteenth century date and later, but not before.

### **Inland Contact Period: A.D. 1850 — Present**

After 1850, historical documents, both oral and written, become more and more plentiful and reliable, and only occasionally will archaeological methods have much to contribute.

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## **II**

### **Nigeria Before 1800**

## PEOPLES OF THE CROSS RIVER VALLEY AND THE EASTERN NIGER DELTA

E. J. ALAGOA

### The Cross River Valley: Cultural Watershed

The geographical area of the Benue-Cross valley may have been a cultural watershed in the history of Africa. The languages spoken by the peoples of this area have been classified in the Benue-Congo, a sub-family of the large Niger-Congo family of African languages.<sup>1</sup> Thus the languages of the Benue-Cross valley lie geographically between the bulk of Sudanic languages on the West African coast and the extensive Bantu languages spoken from the Cameroons through Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. Linguistically too, the languages of the Benue-Cross area have enough in common with those to the west of them to have been classified in the past as West Sudanic, and yet also are so similar to Bantu to the east as to earn the name semi-Bantu. These languages, therefore, form a bridge between the languages of the Guinea coast, and the Bantu to the east. This special nature of the Benue-Cross languages as a bridge thus confirms the classification of the Guinea coast and the Congo basin as forming a single culture area. And it was also on the basis of the linguistic evidence that the middle Benue region has been suggested as the area in which the Bantu languages originated.<sup>2</sup>

In historical terms, this means that the speakers of Bantu spread south-eastwards from the area in which the Benue-Cross languages of Nigeria are spoken, through the Congo valley to the rest of Central, East and Southern Africa. According to linguistic evidence therefore, the peoples of the Cross River basin are closer to the Bantu than to their Nigerian neighbours to the west. Thus, though the immediate neighbouring Igbo peoples to the west also belong to the Niger-Congo family of African languages, Igbo is classified within the Kwa sub-family of it.

However, even the linguistic data contain evidence of the close historical relations

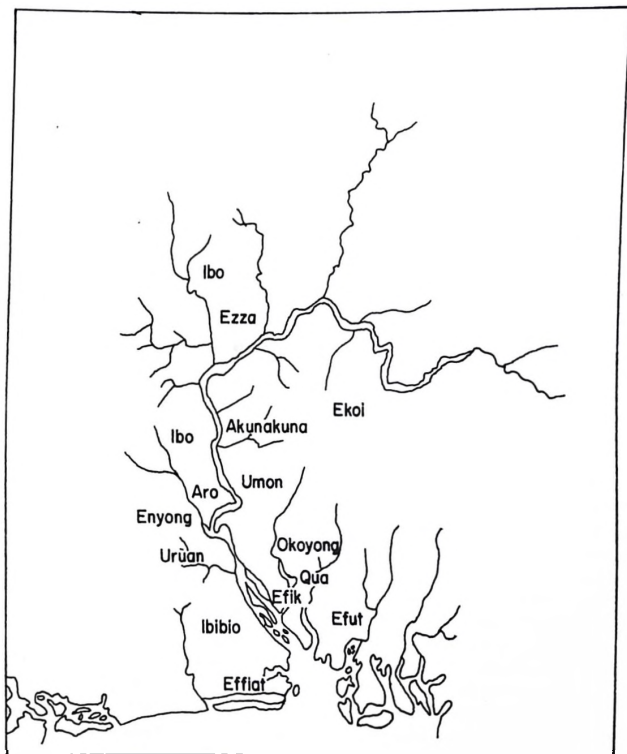
1. J.H. Greenberg, *Languages of Africa*, Bloomington, 1966, p. 8.

2. M.J. Herskovits, "A preliminary consideration of the Culture Areas of Africa", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 26, pp. 50-64.

3. Greenberg, op. cit., p. 38 M. Guthrie, "Some developments in the prehistory of the Bantu Languages," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1962, p. 280, 'locates the home of Proto-Bantu in Central Africa "in the bush country to the south of the equatorial forest midway between the two coasts".'

and cultural contacts that have existed between the Efik, Ibibio and other Cross River peoples and their Kwa neighbours to the west. There is evidence of movements of groups of people west and east across the boundaries of the Kwa and Benue-Congo-speaking areas. Thus, to the south-west, the Benue-Congo speakers extend beyond the Ibibio area in a bulge into the delta. The Andoni of Opobo areas of the Rivers State form such a bulge of Benue-Congo speakers into the Niger Delta occupied mainly by the Ijo. The Ogoni of the Rivers State are a further extension of Benue-Congo speakers westwards bordering on both Igbo and Ijo. Clearer evidence of the westward expansion of Benue-Congo speakers is, perhaps, the presence of outposts of small groups wholly within areas of Kwa speakers. That is the case with a number of small groups within the Rivers State such as the Abua, Ogbia, Mini, Kugbo, Odual, Ogbogolo, Bukuma and Abuloma.

On the other hand, there are pockets of Kwa-speaking groups that obviously moved eastwards into the Benue-Congo area. This is the case with the Iyala (Yalla) and Nkum



Cross River People

of Ogoja Province; and the Nkoro and Opobo (Ibani)—Ijo groups of Opobo in the Rivers State.<sup>4</sup>

Within Nigeria, however, the Efik, Ibibio and Cross River peoples are closest linguistically to groups to the north of them in the central Benue valley. Such groups as those of the Jos Plateau, the Jukun, and Tiv belong in the same Benue-Congo sub-family with the Efik, Ibibio, and the majority of Cross River languages.

In the Benue-Congo sub-family, the member languages have been classified into Plateau, Jukunoid, Cross River, and Bantoid groups. Within the Cross River group, Greenberg classified the languages into three sub-groups as follows:

1. Boki, Gayi (Uge), Yakoro.

2. Ibibio, Efik, Ogoni (Kana), Andoni, Akoiyang, Ododop, Koro.

3. Akunakuna, Abine, Yako, Asiga, Ekuri, Ukelle, Okpoto-Mteze Olulumo.<sup>5</sup>

The Ekoi peoples of the Cross River basin have been classified as speakers of languages not only in the Bantoid group along with the Tiv and Bantu, but are thought to have descended "from the same immediate parent languages as that of the Bantu languages".<sup>6</sup>

These linguistic affinities suggest that the peoples inhabiting the territory watered by the Cross and Qua-Iboe Rivers formed a cultural continuum with the peoples of the central Benue valley. And further, that this area may have formed a cultural watershed in ancient times in the history of Africa, as the cradle of the great Bantu peoples of Central and Southern Africa. The language map also provides leads to the directions of migrations of peoples or of the exchange of ideas and of various forms of contacts between peoples.

### Migrations and Contacts

No unitary traditions of origin have been recorded for the Ibibio, the largest group in the Cross River basin, probably because of the absence of a unitary political authority over them in the past. The earliest scholars to work among the Ibibio concluded that the absence of traditions of origin meant that the Ibibio were "a people of hoar antiquity" who could no longer remember an earlier home.<sup>7</sup>

4. Greenberg, op. cit., p. 8 for Iyala; D.W. Crabb, *Ekoid Bantu Languages of Ogoja Part I*, Cambridge, 1965, p. 5 for Nkum. Kay Williamson, "The Benue-Congo Languages and Ijo" in Jack Perry (ed.), *Linguistics in sub-Saharan Africa*, Ibadan, 1971, pp. 245-306. The Yalla apparently moved south-eastwards from original homes in Idoma country.
5. Greenberg, op. cit., pp. 8-9. According to P.A. Talbot, "The land of the Ekoi, Southern Nigeria", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 6, 1910, 646. The people named Ododop (at subgroup 2) by the Efik and Ekoi, call themselves Korawp (same as Korop). Mr. E.O. Bassey identifies the groups listed by Greenberg as follows: Gayi (Uge) = Otugwang—Ukpe, Kakoro = Bekwarra, Akoiyang = Okoyong (Kiong), Okoro-Mteze = Okpodon-Meze = Ukelle, Ekuri = Yako.
6. Crabb, op. cit., p. 15. The following Ogoja ethnic groups listed as Ekoid: Akparabong, northern and southern Etung, Nde, Ofurop, Abanyum, Nnam, Akaju, Nkim, Nkum, Aram, Nselle. Other Ekoid groups are the Kwa near Calabar, Ejagham, Ekoi, Keaka and Obang of the Western Cameroons.
7. D.A. Talbot (Mrs), *Women's mysteries of a primitive people: the Ibibio of Southern Nigeria*, London 1915, p. 5; P.A. Talbot, *Tribes of the Niger Delta: their Religions and Customs*, London, 1932, p. 130 cites a Kalabari chief, G.A. Yellow, "and several Ibo" as saying, "We regard Ibibio people, as the first ever made by Chi".

Among the smaller Ekoi groups to the north and north-east of the Ibibio, however, Talbot got a general impression that they had come from homes further north, "for the site of each new town is to the south of the former one".<sup>8</sup> This general impression agrees conveniently with the linguistic relation to groups in the Benue valley, and the suggestion that south-eastward movements from that area may have led to the spread of the Bantu languages into Central and Southern Africa. In fact, a scholar of local extraction has stated that most of the peoples of the Cross River valley "relate how they migrated from somewhere north of the Cross River as a result of pressure from the Ankpa", and that "the Efik-Ibibio, Aro's, Ejagham, Yakur, must have come from an area somewhere in the valley of the Benue".<sup>9</sup> Talbot however, reported other migrations from the Bantu areas to the east, such as the Ododop or Korawp.<sup>10</sup> These migrations from the east; mainly from the Cameroons, Talbot thought to be recent, in the last century. A similar impression of comparatively recent migration from the east has been given concerning the Yako (Yakurr) who are said to have come from the Oban forest to the east "perhaps rather more than a hundred years ago".<sup>11</sup>

In recent years local historians have tended to trace the origins of peoples of the Cross River basin to "the orient".<sup>12</sup> This trend is manifested in an official publication of the government of the former South-Eastern State of Nigeria, which derived all the peoples of the state from "Central and East Africa".<sup>13</sup>

Traditions of origin have been most faithfully recorded for the group that developed central state forms of political control. Efik traditions of origin also give a north to south direction of migration. The first location identifiable on the ground is Ibom, a town in Arochukwu in Imo State.<sup>14</sup> Other traditions recorded from Arochukwu sources state that one of their rulers "whose father was named Aro", had obtained Akpa (Jukun) mercenaries to drive away from Ibom, people identified as Ibibio.<sup>15</sup> The group driven away could have been the Efik. Efik traditions do not detail the circumstances in which they left Ibom. But the traditions seek to make the point that the Efik were a people apart from the Ibibio by stating that they were driven from their next stopping place, Uruan, by their Ibibio hosts because they refused to worship the Ibibio god, Atakpo Uruan.<sup>16</sup> From Uruan the Efik apparently migrated to Ikpa Ene and to Creek Town. From Creek Town they expanded to Old Town, Duke Town

8. P.A. Talbot, "The land of the Ekoi . . ." p. 648.

9. Okoi Arikpo, "Who are the Nigerians?" 1957, Lugard Lectures, Lagos, 1958, p. 18.

10. Talbot, "The Land of the Ekoi", p. 646.

11. Darryl Forde, *Yako Studies*, London, 1964, p. 167. Field work was done in 1935 and 1939.

12. E.U. Aye, *Old Calabar through the centuries*, Calabar, 1967, p. 22.

13. Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs, *Nigeria's South-Eastern State; an introduction*, Calabar, n.d., p. 4.

14. A.E. Afigbo, "Efik origin and migrations reconsidered", *Nig. Mag.* No. 87, 1965, p. 269; Aye, op. cit., p. 23 names three settlements: "Itu Mbauzo, Ibom and Ututu in the vicinity of Arochuku". Jeffreys, "Efik origin", *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 91, 1966, pp. 297-99 contests the Ibom tradition.

15. D.C. Simmons, "Notes on the Aro", *Nigerian Field*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1958, p. 27. The Akpa mercenaries are said to have settled at Ibom.

16. Afigbo, op. cit., p. 269 testimony of Chief Thomas A. Efon, 60 years, of Duke Town; according to Aye, op. cit., p. 24, the Efik "refused to conform to the religious demands of their hosts".



and all the other settlements on the Cross River estuary. It was from the period of settlement at Creek Town that the Efik would appear to have developed their distinctive institutions and identity.

Traditions of origin provide indications of contacts of various types between peoples in the past. The traditions of peoples of the Cross River region seem to confirm the relationships suggested by the linguistic affinities with peoples of the Benue valley, and with the Bantu-speaking peoples of the east. For the periods subsequent to the remote times of the settlement of the first populations on the land, the main external influences on the Cross River area were from the Jukun empire to the north-east, of the region. The Aro were virtually a part of the region, and their influence and interaction with the Cross River peoples was more intimate and recent.

The name Akpa by which the Jukun are identified in the Cross River region has been noted to have a wide distribution within the region. The town of Calabar on the Cross River estuary, for example, is known locally as Atakpa, with a possible correlation with Jukun Ata Akpa (Ata of the Akpa, that is, king of the Akpa). Further, "the descendants of the original Ejagham inhabitants of Calabar are known to the Efiks as the Abakpa or people of Akpa."<sup>17</sup> The Ibibio on their part refer to the estuary of the Cross River as Aqua Akpa, Great Sea.<sup>18</sup> These Akpa references to the estuary may indicate the use of the area as an export outlet by the Jukun, for the slaves collected in their extensive raids over Northern Nigeria. The presence of manillas in the Benue valley is further evidence of trade links stretching from the Cross River estuary, possible through the Aro system, to the Benue.

Early relationships between the Jukun and peoples of the Cross River region have also been seen in institutions basic to the life of the communities. Thus evidence of the divine kingship and sun-worship of the Jukun has been found in the titles of Ntoe among the Ekoi, and Ntinya and Okuku among the Ibibio.<sup>19</sup> It may be noted, however, that evidence of divine or sacred kingship is to be found among several peoples of Africa. Nigerian groups among whom the institution is found include the Nri Igbo, Igala, Benin, and the Yoruba.<sup>20</sup> Its presence among the Cross River peoples can only be used as an argument for relationship with the Jukun as cumulative evidence in combination with the other evidence.

### Internal Developments

The unity of the Cross River in geographical terms may be matched by the affinities in the cultural patterns of its peoples induced by mutual contacts. The area is characterized by communities organized in segmented political systems deriving their

17. Arikpo, op. cit., p. 19.

18. U.E.E. Obio-Offiong, *An Introduction to Nsib history: a history of Afagba Obio Offiong and a first step to the study of Ibibio history*, Aba, 1959.

19. Arikpo, op. cit., p. 19 uses Ehagham Ntoe example; M.D.A. Jeffreys, "Some notes on the Ekoi", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 69, 1939, pp. 95-108 uses Ekoi *ntui* and Ibibio *ntinya*; also Jeffreys, "The burial bird for an Okuku", *African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1955, pp. 134-37 on sun-worship among the Ibibio.

20. Jan Vansina, "A Comparison of African Kingdoms", *Africa*, Vol. XXXII, 1962, pp. 324-34; M.W. Young, "The Divine Kingship of the Jukun: a re-evaluation organ sation," *African Notes*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1967, pp. 18-3, compares Igala to Yoruba, Benin, Jukun.

stability social controls from various forms of societies, or associations and age-grade organizations. The Ibibio have had four main men's associations—*Ekpo*, *Idiong*, *Ekong* and *Ekpe* (or *Egbo*)—the last thought to have been derived from the Ekoi east of the Cross River.<sup>21</sup> The Efik had the *Ekpe* (*Egbo*) or Leopard Society, *Obong*, *Ekpiri Akata*, *Ukwa*, *Enana Eka*, and *Ehang* men's societies.<sup>22</sup> There were also associations exclusive to women in many of these communities. Thus the Ibibio had the *Ebre* and the *Njama* Society; the Efik had the *Ibang Isong*; and the Ekoi had the *Numm* whose priestess could discipline men who maltreated women.<sup>23</sup>

The Yako system, for example, has been described as one where "governmental powers—including both political action and judicial decisions—[are] widely distributed among a number of overlapping agencies. Wide political relations then largely resolve themselves into modes of co-operation with and competition between such associations."<sup>24</sup> The Yako thus had an Association of Leaders (*Yakambn*) composed of the ritual heads of patricians, which exercised general authority. The leader of this organization, in turn, depended for the execution of decisions and punishment of offenders on the *Ebiabu*, a graded ritual, executive and recreational association. He could also use the associations of fighters, and of hunters. However, the Leopard Society stood outside the authority of the Leaders as a "tolerated opposition". In the final analysis the real seat of moral authority rested in the Council of Priests or the Heads (*Yabot*), in each village. Again, even the heads had to rely on other associations for physical enforcement of their orders.

There was, accordingly, no hierarchy of authority in these communities. But order was maintained by a balance of understanding among the associations, overlapping membership of them, and respect for the rules of public conduct generally recognized in the community.

The *Egbo*, *Ekpe* (Ibibio, Efik,) or *Ngbe* (Ekoi) Society related to the spirit of the Leopard is widespread throughout the Cross River region. It is said to have been started by the Ekoi from whose country it spread through Ododop, Iffiang, Akwa and Efut to the Efik at Calabar.<sup>25</sup> Among the Efik the people of Obutong (Old Town) are thought to have obtained it first from a man and his wife from the Cameroons.<sup>26</sup>

Among the Ekoi, *Ekpe* was the most important society, and its building the most prominent structure in every village. So important and central was this institution that a migrating Ekoi village would make no farms or perform any other tasks at its new

21. Daryll Forde & G.I. Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking Peoples of South-eastern Nigeria*, London, 1950, p. 73.
22. D.C. Simmons, "Analysis of cultural reflection in Efik folklore", *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 74, No. 292, 1961, p. 134. J.C. Cotton, "The people of Old Calabar", *Journal of African Society*, Vol. 4, No. 15, 1905, p. 306 lists also Efirekpq, Iquat, Uba, and Anko.
23. Forde & Jones, op. cit., p. 73 for Ebre; Jeffreys, review of Forde & Jones, *African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1952, p. 42 for Njama; Simmons, op. cit., 1961, p. 134 for Ibang Isong; Talbot, op. cit., 1910, p. 644, for Nimm.
24. Forde, op. cit., 1964, p. 166ff.
25. P.A. Talbot, *In the Shadow of the bush*, London, 1912, p. 37.
26. Ado N'Idu, "Ekpe: Cross River Cult", *West African Review*, 1959, p. 749. The couple are state to have been killed "immediately after".

settlement site until the position of its *Ekpe* shrine was chosen and an "*Ekpa Ntam* (the house without walls) was erected to mark the spot".<sup>27</sup> Among the Efik, *Ekpe* was built into an organization of surpassing prestige and an effective instrument of government. In Ibibio country, however, *Ekpo* had to contend with the primacy of the *Idiong* society.<sup>28</sup>

The wide diffusion of *Ekpe* over the Cross River region gave members of *Ekpe* immunity and privileges wherever they went among other members of *Ekpe*. *Ekpe* became an instrument of inter-group authority able to assure its members redress of grievances over the entire area.

*Ekpe*, like other societies, was graded. A new entrant paid fees appropriate to each grade between at least twelve months intervals. Each grade had its peculiar "ritual, its dances and dress, and to the novice successive mysteries are shown, proper to the grade he is about to enter and peculiar to it".<sup>29</sup> Members of grades were also distinguished by items of dress: "cocks' and peacocks' feathers [were] worn by the first, second, third and fourth grades. The ostrich feather [was] conferred on entrance into the fifth grade, and worn also by the sixth, seventh and eighth".<sup>30</sup> The society naturally underwent changes as it entered each new community, and also through time in each community.

The position of the head priest of *Ekpe*, called *Eyamba* (*Iyamba*) among the Efik, and *Musungu* in "Old Ekoi" was the most important.<sup>31</sup> It came to be associated with the development of kingship in the Efik state of Calabar. There was usually only one *Eyamba* at any one time throughout the Efik country.

It may be assumed from the internal harmony and stability achieved by these stateless communities that, the institutions operative in them were adequate for their needs. However, we have the further evidence of great cultural achievements as proof of this adequacy. It is necessary to cite only two of the most spectacular examples, that is, the development of a secret writing, *Nsibidi*, associated with *Ekpe* and the impressive monoliths of the Middle Cross River, known locally as *Akwanshi*.

### **Nsibidi**

*Nsibidi* was the reduction into writing of the sign language used in the *Ekpe*, *Ukpoto*, *Ukwa*, and *Isong Esil* societies among the Ekoi groups on both banks of the Cross River and in the Igbo country as far west as Bende.<sup>32</sup> It is also found among the Efik and

27. Talbot, op. cit., 1912, p. 39.

28. P.A. Talbot, *Life in Southern Nigeria: the Magic, Beliefs and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe*, London, 1923, p. 17.

29. J. Parkinson, "A Note on the Efik and Ekoi Tribes of the Eastern Province of Southern Nigeria", *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 37, 1907, p. 264.

30. J.C. Cotton, op. cit., 1905, p. 306.

31. Talbot, op. cit., 1912, p. 43.

32. E. Dayrell, Further notes on "Nsibidi signs with their meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria", *J. Roy Anth. Inst.*, Vol. 41, 1911, p. 522. Dayrell found nsibidi signs on the bodies of women from "1. Efik, — Calabar. 2. enfitop — Ikom. 3. Attam — Obubra. 4. Olulumo — Ikom. 5. Inde — Ikom. 6. Indem — Obubra. 7. Ibo — Bende. 8. Akunakuna — Afikpo. 9. Inkum — Ikom. 10. Adda — Ibo tribe. 11. Injor — Ekoi, Ikom. 12. Akparabong — Ikom. 13. Abu — Boki, Ikom. 14. Ogada — Obubra. 15. Akam — Ikom."

Ibibio. An early investigator had, in apparent error, stated that *nsibidi* originated among the Igbo, from the miming and scribblings of idiok monkeys.<sup>33</sup> Talbot was unable to obtain the tradition among the Uyanga, but had been assured by the Ekoi that *nsibidi* was an Ekoi invention.<sup>34</sup>

The way *nsibidi* operated among insiders was as follows: "The sign having first been drawn, one member points at it with the index finger of his right hand, but does not speak. The other member then points at the sign with the first and second fingers of his right hand, remaining in that position with his arm out for a few seconds, he then proceeds to make different motions with his hands, etc., explaining the meaning of the sign to the other member. This goes on for a short time in silence until the interpretation is complete. The first member who pointed at the sign then translates the meanings".<sup>35</sup>

Normally, *nsibidi* signs were tattooed on the faces and bodies of women, on calabashes, marked on walls, placed on roads as warnings or to convey the instructions of a chief. Such common signs were generally known in the communities, and were also apparently uniform over wide areas. But the greater body of *nsibidi* lore was the secret preserve of members of the societies that used it. In such societies, long conversations were conducted in *nsibidi* signs. There is a recorded story written in *nsibidi* and the proceedings of a court taken in *nsibidi* and accounts of letters written in it.<sup>36</sup> As for the signs themselves, over five hundred have been recorded.<sup>37</sup>

It was probably the secrecy attached to *nsibidi* that prevented its growth into a proper script. People who knew it could not experiment with it or use it in many spheres of activity, such as tallying trade goods and keeping accounts. It was thought to be dangerous in some way, and the secrecy was explained in mysterious terms. Macgregor, for example, explained that Efik refused to show knowledge of *nsibidi* because "*nsibidi* is used almost only to express love" among them.<sup>38</sup> However, among the Ibibio, it seems to have been used, in a restricted way, to keep records of the past: "There existed drawings or paintings and designs together with relics at the ancestral shrines, for the purpose of history interpretation by the sacred custodian of the shrines, who was always the priest-king of the particular lineage".<sup>39</sup>

33. J.K. Macgregor, "Some notes on Nsibidi", *J. Roy. Anth. Inst.*, Vol. 39, 1909, p. 211. His two main informants were Abiriba Igbo. Onuaba and Ize Ikpe. Macgregor also derived the word *nsibidi* from "an Ibo word *sbidi*, meaning to play" from the play of the *idiok*. He rejects H. Goldie's Efik Dictionary's derivation of the word from Efik *sibi*, to cut from the incision of the signs on calabashes, etc.

34. Talbot, op. cit., 1910, p. 650. Ugwuakuma appears under Biase in Vol. I, 1963 Census, p. 107. T.L. Cook, *Benue-Congo News Letter* 6 (1969) lists Gwune (Agwa Gwun E. Akuna-kuna) along with Umon as sections of Biase, as a Cross River language.

35. Dayrell, op. cit., pp. 521-22.

36. Macgregor, op. cit., p. 219 has the case record in *nsibidi* signs.

37. E. Dayrell, "Some *nsibidi* sings", *Man.*, vol. 10, 1910, pp. 113-14, records 55; Dayrell, op. cit., 1911, 363; Macgregor, op. cit., 1909, 98; Talbot, op. cit., 1910, p. 650 recorded "several hundred characters."

38. Macgregor, op. cit., p. 210.

39. Obio-Offiong, op. cit., p. 3.

Akwanshi<sup>40</sup>

There are a total of two hundred and ninety-five stone figures recorded over an area 350 square miles in extent in the middle Cross River. The name *Akwanshi*, meaning, 'dead person in the ground' is applied to the figures found among the Nta, Nselle and Nde. Those in Abanyom (Abanyum) are given the generic name for stone, *Atal*. The Akaju refer to their carved stone figures as *Alaptal*, 'long stones'. The stone figures are found in groups of up to thirty-four, usually in circles. They were apparently erected in the centres of village squares to commemorate dead priest kings or *ntee*. Most of the villages have, however, moved, and the *akwanshi* stand on the outskirts or even out in the bush.

The Cross River *akwanshi* consist of hard columns of stone which the carvers have smoothed, adding human features; eyes, nose, mouth, beard, a raised navel, and sometimes arms, hands, and stylized ears, and circles indicating breasts. There are also sometimes tribal markings that used to be current among groups living in the area, and decoration that may represent *nisibidi* signs.

The *akwanshi* are a significant artistic phenomenon in Africa. They are isolated from other groups of stone figures in Africa, such as the *Esie* and other Yoruba work, the *nomoli* of Sierra Leone, or the *mintadi* and other stone sculptures of the Congo. They are thus geographically and stylistically isolated. They have, however, been compared to other famous works of art in the Ibibio country in wood, the *Ekpu* figures of Oron: "Both are ancestor memorials with elaborate beards and scutiform faces, and, in both, the form of the original pole or boulder, from which they were carved, is retained in the finished work".<sup>41</sup>

Their isolation over a restricted area suggests that the *akwanshi* were produced within a culture complex. The various Ekoi groups living in the area have traditions relating them to their ancestors. These traditions are most definite and elaborate among the Nta. Out of thirty-nine *akwanshi* in this area, twenty-three are named after ancestors, the last of whom died in 1900. In addition to the clarity of the traditions here, the Nta *akwanshi* are executed in a greater variety of styles. These facts suggest that the prototypes were made in this area and spread to neighbouring groups in the middle Cross River. *Akwanshi* have been found among the Nselle, Nnam, Akaju, Abanyom, Nde, Iyala, Nkum, Oshopong, Boki, and Etung.

From the evidence of the Nta ancestor list, the *akwanshi* have been dated to 'a period extending from the beginning of the sixteenth-century to the beginning of the present century'.<sup>42</sup> This is a conservative estimate to be corrected by archaeology in the area of these unique figures which bear testimony to the genius of the peoples of the Cross River basin.

40. This section is a summary of Philip Allison's two books, *Cross River Monoliths*, Lagos, 1968; and *Africa Stone Sculpture*, London, 1968, pp. 25-35. There are samples of Akwanshi at the Lagos Museum.

41. Allison, *African Stone Sculpture*, p. 32. See also P.O. Nsugbe, "Oron Ekpu figures", *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 71, 1961, pp. 357-65.

42. Allison, *Cross River Monoliths*, p. 36.



### The Efik State of Calabar

The Efik seem to have separated into units soon after they were driven off Ibibio territory eastwards onto the lower Cross River. One group went up the river to Mbiabo and another to Adiabo, the major group settled at Creek Town.<sup>43</sup> The resources at Creek Town proved insufficient for everybody, and there were faction fights. The Obutong lineage moved out onto the main Cross River estuary at Old Town.

Creek Town continued to suffer from internal problems, as well as external. The settlement was subject to attacks from the neighbouring Ibibio and Ekoi groups, as well as from pirates from Mbiakom on the river. In addition, the people of Old Town attempted to prevent their rivals, the Efik Iboku at Creek Town, from participating in the new trade in slaves developing on the Cross River with European ships coming up the estuary. In an attempt to stem this threat and to escape from internal problems in Creek Town, a section of its population again branched off. It settled on the estuary of the Cross River a few miles south of Old Town, thus gaining an advantage over it in access to the slave ships. This settlement of Atakpa or Duke Town was thus well placed to play the leadership role it came to achieve over all Efik communities on the Cross River.

Thus the development of the Efik communities on the Cross River was achieved through adjustment to internal and external pressures. At Creek Town, a contest for leadership developed between the Ambo (Mbarakom) and the Eyo Nsa families.<sup>44</sup> Eyo became the war leader, defeating the pirates, and bringing home the head of their leader.<sup>45</sup> But the Ambo were in some way paramount, since their chief was able to take up the headship of the *Ekpe* society apparently established after the Efik arrived on the Cross River estuary. The first two "Obong Eyamba Ekpe Iboku" were Ambo.<sup>46</sup> The Ambo began to lose control, however, when some of them left Creek Town in resentment at the growing influence of Eyo Nsa, to settle at Cobham Town in the vicinity of Duke Town.<sup>47</sup> Thenceforth the headship of *Ekpe* among the Efik was taken over by the leaders of Duke Town. This had the effect of leaving effective power in Creek Town in the hands of Eyo Nsa, who became King Eyo Honesty, and of increasing the claims of Duke Town to paramountcy among the Efik.

43. Cotton, op. cit., p. 302. According to Simmons in Forde (ed.), *Efik traders of Old Calabar*, London, 1956, p. 3, the Efik were driven from "Idua a town near the Oron area", and that "some of the Efiks settled in the Enyong area, where they became known as the Enyong".

44. Simmons, Forde (ed.), op. cit., p. 71; A.K. Hart, *Enquiry into the dispute over the obongship of Calabar*, Enugu, 1964, p. 129.

45. Hart, op. cit., p. 129 names the pirate leaders as Uko Mbiakom; Simmons in Forde (ed.), op. cit., pp. 67 says Eyo "decapitated the chiefs of Old Town, Enyong, and Itu".

46. Hart, op. cit., p. 55. According to Simmons, op. cit., 1961, p. 138, "cloth for clothing" various Leopard Society customs and grades" entered Efik culture after 1650.

47. Hart, op. cit., p. 129. The founder was Akabom Ene. Thus Akabom Town became Cobham Town.

Duke Town is said to have won a final victory over Old Town in their vicious competition for the overseas trade on the Cross River estuary in 1767 with the connivance of some English ships' captains.<sup>48</sup> When the Old Town leaders were waiting aboard the ships for a peace meeting, the Duke Town warriors supported by Eyo Honesty of Creek Town, attacked. It was on this occasion that Eyo won the distinction of decapitating an additional ruler, after his success with the pirates. After this victory, the position of Duke Town as first in the slave trade on the Cross River was virtually unchallenged. The only remaining irritant, Salt Town, an Ibibio fishing village on an island near Tom Shott Point, was overcome "about 1800 or a little later".<sup>49</sup>

By the beginning of the 19th century therefore, the Efik had gained control over the whole of the lower Cross River and, especially, its estuary and of its overseas trade. Of the seven sub-groups, Duke Town was beginning to emerge as the leader, in close co-operation with the leaders of Creek Town. The Efik settled down in seven communities as follows:

1. Iboku, in Duke Town, Eyamba Town, Cobham Town, Henshaw Town and Creek Town.
2. Obutong, in Old Town.
3. Adiabo and Ibonda.
4. Mbiabo, in Mbiabo Edere, Ikot Offiong, and Ikoneto' and three other sub-groups.
5. Enwan.
6. Usuk Akpa.
7. Aba Eyen, also in Duke Town.<sup>50</sup>

The comparative harmony achieved among the Efik communities during the 19th century was due in a large measure to the effectiveness of *Ekpe* among them. It moderated the irritations caused by competition for trade, debts, etc. Within Duke Town too, it assisted in providing a solution to the problem of central leadership posed by the new external relations with the visiting European traders. It was necessary for a single authority to collect *comey* or customs, adjudicate trust or credit difficulties with the European merchants. *Ekpe* proved the ideal authority, and its Eyamba or head priest, the logical leader. Accordingly, through a combination of necessity and internal adjustments through *Ekpe*, kingly authority was established in Calabar. Finally, since all men of wealth or influence were members of *Ekpe*, rivalries between individual leaders did not issue into open disruptions of the political system.<sup>51</sup>

48. Simmons in Forde (ed.) op. cit., pp. 67-68 citing eye-witness accounts in Parliamentary Committee enquiry, 1789, *Abridgement of the Minutes of Evidence*, 1790.

49. G.I. Jones, in Forde (ed.), op. cit., 1956, p. 117.

50. Cotton, op. cit., p. 303 gives this listing of the seven "Tribes of Old Calabar". Talbot, op. cit., 1923, p. 159 listed the "Seven tribes of Calabar" as 1. Henshaw Town and Duke Town. 2. Old Town. 3. Creek Town. 4. Adiabo. 5. 'Mbiaodo. 6. Ikoroffiong. 7. Ikoneto. He also referred to a "lost tribe" crushed by a "great cotton tree" they arrogantly tried to hold up in its fall.

51. G.I. Jones, "The Political Organization of Old Calabar", Forde (ed.), op. cit., pp. 116-57. Disruptions came in mid-19th century in struggles between the *Ekpe* aristocracy and the slaves (order of Bloodmen).

The prosperity of Calabar depended on the trade in slaves obtained by raids and by purchase from other groups up the Cross River. Some of the slaves were kept to serve in the households of the rich in the cities, others were sent to plantations. Calabar seems to have come into the overseas trade only in the 17th century. Thus Barbot reports of a voyage to Calabar prior to 1678 resulting in the purchase of 300 slaves, and gives the details of his 1698 trade on the Cross River during which 212 slaves were bought.<sup>52</sup> Prior to this, European traders had done business at an anchorage on the Rio Rey to the east of the Cross River estuary, believing the latter to be unnavigable.<sup>53</sup> According to the Ibibio-speaking Isangele of the Rio del Rey, they had moved to that location on hearing of Portuguese trade at Bonny, and the trade was shifted to the Cross River through an invitation extended to the Europeans by the ruler of Old Town.

### Summary and Conclusion

In sum then, the peoples of the Cross River Region have strong linguistic and historical ties with the middle Benue region of Nigeria. The largest linguistic group in the area, the Ibibio, also seems to have been the longest established in the region. Although there is yet no archaeological work to suggest any firm dates, Ibibio occupation of the region could well date to the period of pre- or proto-Bantu migration postulated by Greenberg, and to the first of four stages of Bantu expansion outlined by Oliver.<sup>54</sup> Since stage three of this expansion is assigned to the second half of the first millennium A.D., and stage four to the present millennium, the first movements recede into an indeterminate period before the Christian era. The traditions of groups within the middle Cross River suggest that some of them came into the region from the new Bantu homelands to the east within the last thousand years.

Efik traditions and the sharing of cultural items like *Ekpe*, *nsibidi*, and others also show close historical contacts with Igbo groups to the west of the Cross River. However, Efik traditions contain little to provide dates in the study of the history of the region. From the fact of their late entrance into the overseas slave trade probably in the 17th century, it has been thought that the Efik did not arrive on the Cross River estuary much earlier. The traditions and genealogies do not suggest earlier dates, since they place such men as Eyo Honesty I (died 1820) only one to three generations from the founding fathers of Creek Town.<sup>55</sup> By the 18th century, Efik expansion had definitely reached the Cross River estuary, and the people had begun to remould cultural elements such as *Ekpe*, *nsibidi*, and others, brought from their wandering contacts with hinterland neighbours, into viable institutions capable of containing the stresses created by the European or Atlantic impact.

52. J. Barbot, *A Description of the coasts of North and South Guinea*, Paris, 1732, pp. 381, 383, 465.

53. E. Ardenner, "Documentary and Linguistic Evidence for the rise of the Trading Politics between Rio del Rey and Cameroons, 1500-1650," in I.M. Lewis, *History and Social Anthropology*, London 1968, pp. 109-110. Cites traditions in H.O. Anderson, "An Intelligence report on the Isangele, Community of the Kumba Division", 1933 or 1934.

54. Roland Oliver, "The Problem of the Bantu Expansion", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 7 No. 3, 1966, pp. 361-76; Greenberg, op. cit.

55. Hart, op. cit. pp. 125, 126, 127.

### The Eastern Delta States

The four delta states of Nembe (Brass), Elem Kalabari (New Calabar), Bonny and Okrika have become well known because of their participation in the overseas slave trade, apparently, from an earlier period than the Efik state of Calabar. They have also been known for the peculiar state institutions they developed for which they have been called variously, city-states and trading states.<sup>56</sup> The last term was applied because of the belief that a majority of the institutions in these states had been developed as a result of the impact of the external trade contact with European merchants. This external influence on the delta states was of the same order as its impact on Calabar. The difference in the lines of development between Calabar and the delta states suggests that other factors were as important as the common influence of the overseas trade in directing the growth of these states. One such internal factor was the Ijo cultural base from which they developed against the Efik and hinterland antecedents of Calabar. The other was the difference in environment: the swamps of the delta against the farmlands of the Cross River valley.

### The Ijo Background

The Ijo language has not yet been definitely classified by linguists. It is not close enough to its biggest neighbours, Igbo, Edo, and Yoruba, to be classified with them in the Kwa sub-family, nor close enough to Efik-Ibibio or Bantu to be classified as Benue-Congo.<sup>57</sup> On a time perspective, it would seem that Ijo has existed as a separate language from Igbo, Edo, or Yoruba for at least five thousand years.<sup>58</sup> This linguistic evidence suggests that theories deriving the Ijo from any of these major ethnic groups as a result of migrations into the delta in comparatively recent times cannot be accepted. It is clear that the Ijo have existed as a separate group, and in the Niger Delta, for a very long time indeed. Their complete assimilation to the peculiar delta environment is additional support to this view. Finally, Ijo oral traditions indicate no plausible place of origin outside the delta, but rather describe migrations and expansion over the length and breadth of the Niger Delta.

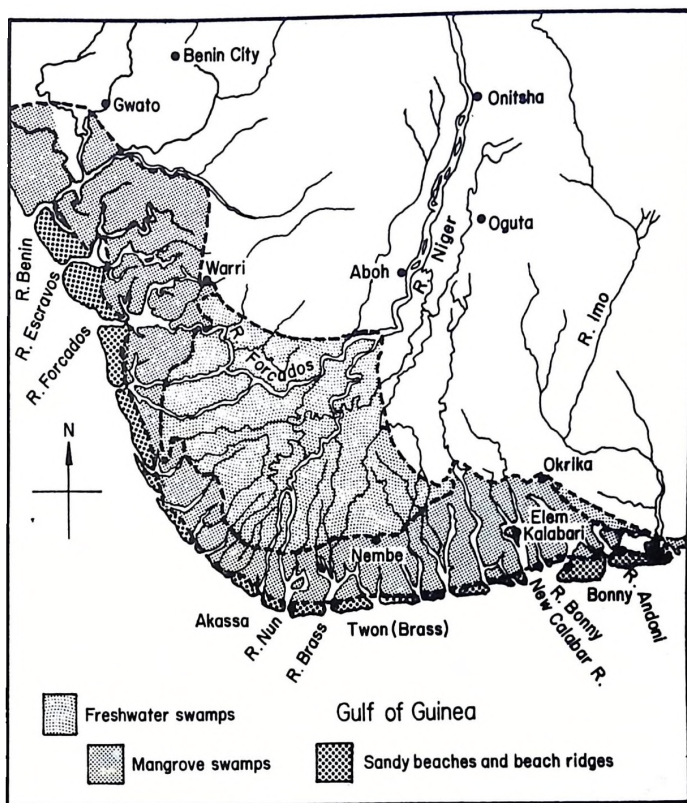
A preliminary survey of Ijo oral traditions throughout the delta suggests the central area of the delta as the heartland from which various groups migrated to outlying regions of the delta.<sup>59</sup> Such places as Ogobiri, Ikibiri, Oporoma, the Apo Creek, and Obiama in the central delta area feature as major centres of outward migration. But such place as Ke and Oboloma (Nembe) in the eastern delta, and Oproza in the western delta also served as secondary centres of migration. Oral traditions at the capitals of the eastern delta states, suggest that their founding groups also migrated

56. K.O. Dike, *Trade and politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885*, Oxford, 1956, called them city-states; cf., G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, Oxford, 1963.

57. Kay Williamson, "Benue-Congo Languages and Ijo", p. 281.

58. Estimate made by Dr Kay Williamson by the glotto-chronological method.

59. E.J. Alagoa, "Oral tradition among the Ijo of the Niger Delta", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1966, 413; "Ijo Origins and Migrations", *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 91, 1966, 279-88; No. 92, 1967, 47-55; *A History of the Niger Delta*, Ibadan, 1972.



The Niger Delta

from the central Ijo delta, although some of these migrants seem to have met groups of proto-Ijo already settled in the eastern delta. Traditions at Nembe tell of migrations from Obiama, and later, from the Itsekiri kingdom of Warri in the western delta. The founders of the states of Elem Kalabari and Bonny seem to have come from the central delta in the area between Ogobiri and Kolokuma territory. They passed overland to points on the edge of the eastern delta before being forced back into the delta by hostile hinterland neighbours and by their unfamiliarity with life on the mainland. Migrants from the central delta dispersal centre of Ikibiri would seem to have settled on Okrika island along with others.

The migrations from the central Ijo delta into the area of the eastern delta states would seem to have taken place much more than a thousand years ago. This estimate is derived from a comparison of the dialects of the eastern delta states with dialects of



the central delta.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly the oral traditions of these states refer to times within the present millenium, from about A.D. 1000. Radio-carbon dates from a recent excavation at the town of Ke give support to this estimate.<sup>60</sup>

Environmental conditions apparently played a big part in determining the direction in which the communities established in the eastern delta developed. The migrants from the central delta moved from a fresh water delta environment to salt water swamp environment. That meant first, that they had to change from a farming economy with only a little fishing on the side to a fully fishing economy. This change was determined by the fact that the area of the eastern delta was largely under water, and there was little settlement land, and even less for farming. Settlers in this region had by necessity to depend on fishing and the manufacture of salt. They had then to trade fish and salt for vegetable produce from the fresh water delta, and even further into the hinterland. Oral traditions from different parts of the delta suggest that this internal trade spanned the length and breadth of the delta, and reached westwards past the region of the Benin River to Lagos.<sup>61</sup> Trade goods from the far west reached the eastern delta states by relays from Ijo groups on the Benin River, and from the Itsekiri kingdom of Warri, through the bassan Ijo of the central delta. It was because of the experience and trade routes developed from this earlier internal trade that the eastern delta states participated successfully in the overseas trade in slaves and other goods. Captain Pereira actually listed the goods traded in this internal trade into the hinterland from Bonny around 1500 as big canoes, slaves, yams, cows, goats and sheep.<sup>62</sup>

### Internal Developments

The environment and the type of economy induced some special changes in the political and social systems brought from the central delta.<sup>63</sup> In the political sphere, the fishing villages of the eastern delta retained the assembly of all adult males, of the farming village, but the presidency no longer went to the oldest member, but to the head of the lineage which first discovered this scarce piece of settlement land. His new title of *Amanyababo* also implied proprietorship, and the office came to be endowed with greater executive and political authority than the *Amaokosowei* or village elder of the central delta.

The trade into the hinterland and across the delta in its turn stimulated other changes which were accelerated by the overseas trade. The external contacts, and

60. Kay Williamson, *A Grammar of the Kolokuma dialect of Ijo*, Cambridge, 1965, p. 3, notes that on the Swedes 200-word list, Kolokuma (Central Delta) scores 65.2 percent with nembé, and 62.4 percent with Kalabari. Glotto-chronological calculations give 1000 years separation time. E.J. Alagoa, "Ke: the history of an old delta community", *Oduma*, Vol. 2 No. 1, 1974, 4-10.

61. E.J. Alagoa, "Long-distance Trade and States in the Niger Delta", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, XI, 3, 1970, 319-29.

62. G.H.T. Kimble, *Esmeraldo, de situ orbis by Duarte Pacheco Pereira*, London, 1937, p. 132.

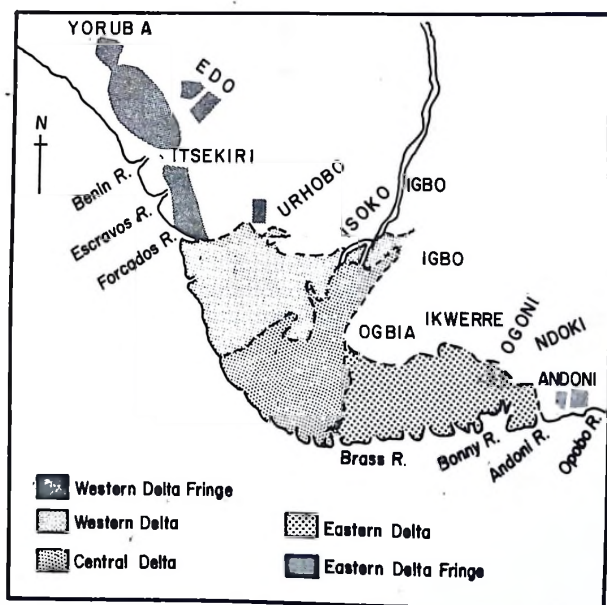
63. E.J. Alagoa, "The development of Institutions in the states of the Eastern Niger Delta", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1971, 269-78. Robin Horton, "From Fishing Village to City-States: a Social History of New Calabar", in M. Douglas & P.M. Kaberry (eds.), *Man in Africa*, London, 1969.

sometimes, wars with neighbouring peoples, which these commercial activities engendered gave the *Amanyanabo* greater opportunities for the exercise of authority as the representative of the community than existed in earlier times. The office gradually developed from the informal presidency of a village assembly into an effective kingship. Even more drastic transformation was accomplished in the lineage institution of the *Wari* (House) inherited by the eastern delta communities from the central Ijo. The lineage heads became trading chiefs. Prosperous traders bought slaves from the hinterland, to enlarge and strengthen the *Wari* or House. These changed lineage-type trading organizations or Houses gave the heads greater control over the lives of individual members. But successor leaders were appointed after the death of the founders, by the vote of all adult members on criteria of ability to enhance the wealth and political status of the House.

It was at this stage of development of the communities of the eastern delta that they may be said to have become states—city-states or trading states. Analysis of the kinglists of these states suggests that the kingship institution may have developed between 1200 and 1400. The House system which is recognized as characteristic of these states was, in all probability, developed before about 1600.

### External Trade and Internal Change

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive on the Nigerian coast and the



The Ijo and their Neighbours

eastern Niger delta area to carry slaves to European colonies in America. They bought yams and other local food to feed the slaves on the passage across the Atlantic. But in time they introduced food crops from Brazil and other parts of South America to be grown in West Africa for the same purpose. Such crops as maize and cassava are believed to have been introduced this way.

In this area and at Warri in the western delta region the Portuguese were most active and cassava, for example, seems to have passed from there through the internal trade routes to the eastern delta states. The eastern delta was probably most actively involved in the overseas trade from about the 17th century. By that time the Dutch had taken over from the Portuguese as the most important European trading nation in this part of Africa, to be followed by the French and the British. The combined estuary of the Bonny River and the New Calabar River, known to the white traders as the Rio Real (Royal River) was the main centre of European trade in the eastern delta. Accordingly, the states of Bonny and Elem Kalabari became the most direct recipients of external influences. Nembe and Okrika exported their produce at Elem Kalabari or Bonny, although ships also traded occasionally at the estuaries of the Nun and Brass River in Nembe territory. The oral traditions suggest competition for this overseas trade between Bonny and Elem Kalabari, and wars between Nembe and the town of Bile on its route to the Rio Real estuary.

The wealth and new conditions created by the overseas trade may also be cited as the cause of certain political changes in all of these states in the 18th century. It would appear that changes of dynasty occurred in each of these states before 1800 in which power passed into the hands of branches of the royal lineages which had benefited most from the overseas trade. Thus at Bonny, it is stated that because of a protracted war with the neighbouring Andoni, King Awusa was obliged to hand over the throne to Perekule (Pepple) who alone had the wealth and capacity to carry the war to a successful conclusion.<sup>64</sup> From that time on kings of Bonny have come from the direct line of King Pepple. Similarly, the first Amakiri came to power at Elem Kalabari in the same period because of his wealth and ability to repair the damage caused by a great fire.<sup>65</sup> At Nembe, the Mingi dynasty came into being, as did the Ado at Okrika.

Before 1800 then, the eastern delta states had already developed all their important institutions by a combination of internal factors such as the environment, long-distance trade, and the external trade in slaves. It was a dynamic society which continued to change in response to the increased external impact of the 19th century.

64. E.J. Alagoa & A. Fombo, *A Chronicle of Grand Bonny*, Ibadan, 1972.

65. H.W. Brown-West, *A Short Genealogical History of Amachree I of Kalabari*, Yaba, 1956.

## IGBOLAND BEFORE 1800

A. E. AFIGBO

It is difficult to reconstruct the early history of a preliterate and acephalous people. Those who seek to do so can easily fall victim to either wild romanticism or sterile scepticism. These two dangers have been among the main obstacles to the proper study of the history of the Igbo-speaking peoples of southern eastern Nigeria, and until a decade or so ago those who made excursions into this subject were ensnared by the one or the other mistake. There were those, for instance, who, encouraged by the rich profusion of superficial cultural similarities between the Igbo and either the early Egyptians or the Hebrews, built up romantic hypotheses deriving them from Egypt or Israel on those grounds. Thus the Rev. G.T. Basden was inclined to derive the Igbo from the Hebrews or at least to explain their cultural history in terms of Jewish influence. According to him the deep religious nature of the Igbo, their practice of circumcision and certain traits in their language suggest to the investigator a close similarity between their culture and some of the ideas and practices of the Levitical code.<sup>1</sup> The anthropologist, M.D.W. Jeffreys, impressed on his part by the feature of dual organization in Igbo social structure and by certain aspects of Igbo religion, was inclined to focus attention on Egypt as holding the key to Igbo history.<sup>2</sup> Some Igbo writers have themselves claimed Hebrew or Egyptian origin.<sup>3</sup> The significance of these claims to Egyptian, or at any rate Middle-Eastern origin, belongs to the wider framework of West African history and sociology as they are found amongst most West African peoples whether they inhabit the savanna or forest zones, are Islamized or not. It is quite clear, however, that in the present state of our knowledge about West Africa, they cannot be taken seriously by the serious students of Igbo history.

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1. G.T. Basden, "Notes on the Ibo Country", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 39, January-June, 1912, pp. 246-7.
  2. M.D.W. Jeffreys, "Dual Organisation in Africa", *African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1946.
  3. One of such people was Mr K.E. Ijeomanta who traced Aro origin to the Nile Valley (see Enugu Archives, A.D. 635, Aro Sub-Tribes, Second Report on Arochukwu by H.F. Mathews, Anthropological Officer, Southern Provinces of Nigeria); another was Mr Akwaelumo Ike, who claimed that the Igbo are Jews and that the word 'Ibo' is a corruption of the word 'Hebrew'. See his *The Origins of the Ibos*, Aba, n.d.

On the other hand, there are scholars who have been impressed by the lack of conventional records for early Igbo history and have adopted the opposite attitude of scepticism to the possibility of Igbo history. Some of these have written of the Igbo as if they did not exist before the 16th century at which time, it would appear, they suddenly came into existence or in any case into the dim light of proto-history in order either to be conquered and annexed by the Benin and Igala kingdoms, or to be carried across the Atlantic to work in the slave plantations. Thus, for instance, it has been argued that the word *Igbo* originated as a term for slaves, and this would imply that until the massive enslavement of the Igbo after the 16th century their neighbours did not know them or had no name for them.<sup>4</sup> The same attitude would help to account for the fact that not until a short while ago, any group of Igbo-speaking peoples who showed traces of what Europeans were prepared to regard as cultured or civilized were severed from the main Igbo stock with a single but savage stroke of the Hamitic axe. Thus, for instance, the Aro were said to be non-Igbo in origin, but a colony of the Jukun of Kwararafa who in turn were believed to be Hamites.<sup>5</sup> Also the Nri were considered an intrusive group of Hamitic culture-carriers.<sup>6</sup> The result of this attempt to detach these peoples from the Igbo stock was to portray the so-called true Igbo people as a group without a respectable cultural achievement. With regard to such withering scepticism, Mr Christopher Wrigley has rightly pointed out that "where certainty is unattainable, scientific method requires, not complete agnosticism, but acceptance of the most probable hypothesis".<sup>7</sup>

In fact recent advances in history, archaeology and allied branches of anthropology have uncovered bits of evidence which make it possible for the conscientious historian to attempt cautiously to throw some light on those portions of Igbo history hitherto presented as incapable of being illuminated. In attempting this here we shall lay emphasis on three main aspects of Igbo history in the period before 1800 — Igbo origin, the emergence of Igbo society, the Igbo and their neighbours.

### The Origin of the Igbo

There are at least three aspects to the problem of Igbo origin which so far have not always been distinguished by scholars and others. The result is that they have been lumped together and dealt with in an undifferentiated manner with consequent confusion. The first aspect is the origin of the Negro race of whom the Igbo form a part. If this is settled it would at least set the territorial limit within which to look for

4. S.R. Smith, "The Ibo People", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1929. The most important implication of the statement in question is not that the Igbo were not aware of themselves as a people, but that their neighbours had no name for them before about the 16th century, that they did not know themselves, and this would be tantamount to the Igbo not being in existence.

5. (i) Enugu Archives: Arodist 11/7/33. The Aro People see Memo by H.R. Palmer dated 11.5.21 attached to M.P. No. 1195/1921 of 13.7.21.

(ii) Kaduna Archives Loko Prof 151/1921, Tribes of Nigeria: Inter-Relations of, see minute by LGNP attached to M.P. No. 1195/1921 of 11.7.21, etc.

6. M.D.W. Jeffreys, "The Umundri Tradition of Origin", *African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1956.

7. C. Wrigley, "Linguistic Clues to African History" *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1962, p. 269.



the Igbo homeland. The second aspect of the problem is the time and place of differentiation of the Igbo from the common Negro stock, while the third is the origin of the various autonomous and sub-cultural groups of the Igbo-speaking peoples. This last aspect is the subject of traditions which can still be collected in fairly elaborate versions from Igbo villages today. The second and the first appear to be beyond the ken of the average Igbo elder; but educated Igbo young men,<sup>8</sup> anxious to do for their people what has been done for the Yoruba, Edo and other West African peoples and following the example of the speculative ethno-historians of an undocumented past, have come up with vague stories of Egyptian or Eastern origin. Other writers, who have so far failed to make the above necessary distinctions, have attempted to solve the second aspect of the problem using materials which have greater relevance to the third and the results have so far been unfortunate for Igbo history.

With regard to the origin of the Negro race of which the Igbo form a part, it ought to be observed that this belongs to the wider spectrum of African history. But for our limited purpose here it suffices to state that according to the present state of our knowledge, the Negro would seem to have come into existence just below the belt lying along the latitude of Asselar (to the northwest of Timbuktu) and Khartoum at which two places the remains of the earliest representatives of this race have been found.<sup>9</sup> The importance, for the problem of Igbo origin, of this conclusion based on archaeological evidence is that for now it establishes a northern-most limit for the Igbo 'home land'. By destroying the earlier hypothesis of Asiatic origin for the Negro race, it makes nonsense of all legends of Eastern origin for any West African Negro group including the Igbo.

On the second aspect of the problem, that is the differentiation of the Igbo from the original Negro stock, we are forced to depend directly on linguistic evidence as archaeology has yet made no contribution towards the solution of this problem. This is a little unfortunate as linguistic evidence is not as good as archaeological evidence for purposes of deduction in this matter. Igbo is one of the languages which linguists designate 'Kwa', a sub-group of the Niger-Congo group of Negro languages. Other members of the Kwa sub-group include Yoruba, Edo and Idoma. On the basis of glotto-chronological evidence, scholars have come to the conclusion that the languages in the Kwa sub-group must have started diverging, that is assuming their distinctive and individual forms, at least 6000 years ago.<sup>10</sup> Since Igbo, as a mother tongue, is the most important single feature distinguishing the Igbo people from say the Edo, Yoruba, Ijo or Idoma, it can then be suggested that the Igbo began emerging as a distinct people from about 6000 years ago. Where this differentiation took place, that is whether the Igbo entered the region they now occupy as Igbo-speaking or they became Igbo-speaking after settling in this zone, we are not yet in a position to say. This problem may be settled when archaeologists are able to establish how old Igbo

8. Examples include K.E. Ijeomanta and A. Ike mentioned in foot note 3 above.

9. Oliver and Fage: *A Short History of Africa*, Penguin, 1962, pp. 19-22. D. Wiedner, *A History of Africa South of the Sahara*, New York, 1962, pp. 11-13.

10. R.G. Armstrong, *The Study of West African Languages*, Ibadan, 1964, p. 26. C. Wrigley, "Linguistic Clues to African History" *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1962. R.S. Smith *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, Great Britain, 1969, p. 13. R.G. Armstrong, "Glotto-chronology and West African Linguistics", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1962.

occupation of their present home is or when linguists have located at what place Igbo started separating from its sister languages in the Kwa sub-group.

What little archaeological evidence there is, however, would tend to suggest that the Igbo have been in their present home for very long indeed. Professor D.D. Hartle's test excavation at the University of Nigeria (Nsukka) Agricultural Farm, yielded evidence of human occupation dating back to 2,555 B.C. + 130.<sup>11</sup> But this raises the question whether these early occupants were the direct ancestors of the Igbo-speaking people of Nsukka of today. One must concede that there is no unassailable evidence in favour of a positive answer to this question. But it may be relevant to mention that further analysis of the material artifacts recovered by Professor Hartle showed that they bear close resemblance to the material artifacts of the Nsukka people of today. According to him, the materials recovered included "unfired clay vessels that are much like the unfired vessels used in the area (Nsukka) today".<sup>12</sup> This would tend to suggest such a high degree of ethnographic and cultural continuity as could be explained by positing that the present inhabitants of Nsukka are probably in the line of direct descent from the occupants of the area since 3 millennia B.C. If further research confirms this view, it would help to explain the fact that the Igbo have lost all memories of their migration to this part of southern Nigeria.

This brings us to the third aspect of the problem — Igbo migration and dispersal within the area they now occupy. Anthropologists and other scholars who have tried to tackle this matter have invariably ended up with the theory that the Nri-Awka-Orlu complex was probably the earliest centre of Igbo settlement in southern Nigeria, and that it was from there that waves and waves of migrations set out to occupy the other portions of present day Igbo land. Stating this view, Dr P.A. Talbot said:

Ⓐ The Ibo . . . have no tradition of migration from elsewhere and appear to have settled in the thickly populated parts of Nri-Awka and Isu-Ama areas for a very long period and to have spread from there . . .<sup>13</sup>

This view, which is held by most writers<sup>14</sup> on the Igbo people has recently been elaborated upon by Mr G.I. Jones. He describes the Nri-Awka and Isuama (Orlu) area as "the Igbo centre or core" from where waves of migration (some of which he describes as "massive") took off "mainly to the south and east". One, he argues, can assume an early dispersion from this centre to the Nsukka-Udi highlands in the east and an early drift southwards towards the coast. The descendants of the latter are known as the Oratta, Ikwerrri, Etche, Asa and Ndoki tribes . . . One can more positively distinguish a later and more massive dispersal which traditions do refer to,

11. D.D. Hartle, "Archaeology in Eastern Nigeria", *Nigeria Magazine* No. 93, June 1967.

(2) "Archaeology in Eastern Nigeria", in *West African Archaeological Newsletter*, No. 5, 1977.

12. *ibid.*

13. Talbot and Mulhall, *The Physical Anthropology of Southern Nigeria*, Cambridge, 1962, p. 4.

14. V.C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, New York, 1966. B. Floyd, *Eastern Nigeria, A Geographical Review*, London, 1969. Ford and Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking Peoples of South-eastern Nigeria*, London, 1950.

and which was mainly southeast-wards from the Ibo centre into what is now Eastern Iuama area. From this subsidiary dispersion area there was one movement south-south-east into the Aba Division to form the Ngwa group of tribes, and another movement east into the group of tribes, and another movement east into the Umuahia area and thence to the Ohaffia-Arochukwu ridge, with an off-shoot that struck north to become isolated in the heart of the eastern plains and to develop into the North-Eastern Ibo.<sup>15</sup> 'Igbo core', like that which he said settled the West Niger Igbo area, or which were tertiary expansions from the other regions like that which he said started off from the Arochukwu ridge to form the Edda, Item and related peoples of today.<sup>16</sup>

What, one may ask, is the evidence for this hypothesis. The first is the demographic fact that the Nri-Awka and Iuama (Orlu) areas are densely populated. The second is the claim that the peoples of this so-called Igbo core have lost all traditions of migration from anywhere and that this must owe something to the antiquity of their settlement in the area. The third is what has been described as "cultural features".<sup>17</sup> the fact that the Nri-Awka area occupies a central place in Igbo cultural ideology. This latter argument has recently been stated by Dr Barry Floyd as follows:

Over the generations . . . one Igbo-speaking group, the Nri, have been held in great respect throughout Ibo-land. In the light of this it has been suggested that the Ibo perhaps originated from Nri or that their original ancestors founded Nri several centuries ago.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth ground for the hypothesis is the fact that most Igbo groups on the periphery of this Nri-Awka and Iuama area have traditions of migration from this 'core area'.

For the time being these arguments would appear to provide sufficient ground for this 'NriAwka-Iuama' hypothesis, but the matter cannot yet be regarded as proved beyond argument. Before this state could be reached it would be necessary for linguistic research to demonstrate that the NriAwka and Iuama area was the region in which the Igbo language started developing as a distinct form of speech or in the alternative archaeologists will have to establish that this so-called "Igbo core" is the most ancient region of igbo settlement in southern Nigeria. The detailed criticism of this hypothesis cannot be gone into in this short paper, but it is necessary to observe that the pattern which it posits for Igbo occupation of these parts appears too orderly to command belief. Unless we postulate for the Igbo penetration of their present homeland from the north a coherent and organized movement like the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, which could be challenged bearing in mind the likely level of the social evolution of the people at the time, we must admit that it could have been haphazard, spread over a fairly long period, undertaken by little kin groups and extended over a wide front. This would mean the occupation of different parts of the region by different groups at different times and not necessarily from a common centre lying within their present home. The probable meaning for Igbo history, of the claims of

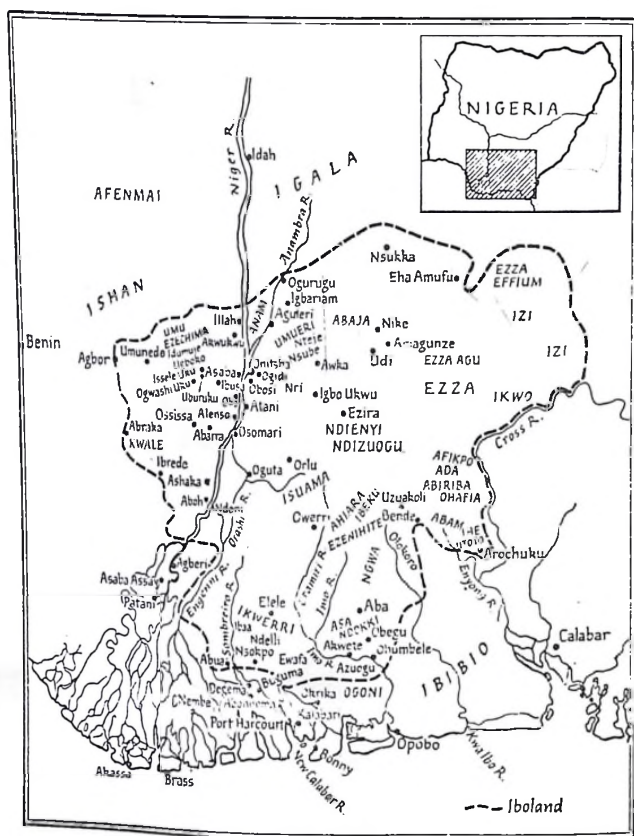
15. G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, Oxford, 1963, p. 30.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

17. *ibid.*, p. 30.

18. B. Floyd, *Eastern Nigeria: A Geographical Review*, p. 29.

certain groups to originate from the Nri-Awka-Isuama area and of other groups to have originated from these other, will be briefly dealt with in the following sections.



The Igbo: Some Places and Peoples

### The Emergence of Igbo Society

The process by which Igbo society, as it was known on the eve of colonial rule, or rather whose blurred picture we see on the pages of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography written in the late 18th century, developed is one of the central problems of Igbo history. But because of the difficulty surrounding the tracing of that process, scholars have so far been content to attempt to describe what the society was like just before the imposition of colonial rule and to analyse the changes which it has undergone since



that epochal event. But time has come when historians should attempt to grapple with that problem. What is done here is just a tentative probing for a solution.

In the prevailing absence of conventional record dealing with the early history of the Igbo, an attempt to reconstruct how Igbo villages, village-groups and clans came into being as coherent socio-cultural and, at times, political units will have to concern itself with the critical analysis of what social-anthropologists have, probably aptly, described as the "ideological charters" validating existing unities and relationships. These charters are what ordinarily may be called traditions of origin of the various autonomous or sub-cultural units. A more or less liberal interpretation of such traditions led Dr Barry Floyd to conclude that Igbo society emerged through the process of one village begetting another.<sup>19</sup> If this were so and all the traditions were carefully collected and analysed it should be possible to construct a genealogical tree for Igbo society pointing to the ultimate development of that organism from one or two ancestral villages. This again would lead one back to the hypothesis of an original Igbo 'core' which has been dealt with above.

And now for the traditions. The average Igbo village or even clan believes itself to be, as Jones has put it, "the descendant of a common ancestor whose sons begat either the village sections or the village sub-sections".<sup>20</sup> One example of this could be given; our choice here being the tradition of origin of the Otanchara clan of Okigwi Division in the northern Igbo sub-cultural group. The ancestor of this clan, *Ora* is said to have migrated from the Nri-Awka complex along with a boon companion of his *Ana*. Their wanderings brought them into the general area of the present Okigwi division in which they first settled where the village-group of uturu is now located. Being farmers the two friends soon quarrelled over farm lands as a result of which *Ora* resumed his wandering leaving *Ana* at their first place of settlement to become the ancestor of uturu. *Ora* eventually settled at a point just a few miles away from the east bank of the Imo. There he had many children among whom were Ihume (now Anglicized Ihube) Ubahu, Okigwi, Amuro, Ezinachi, Ugwuaku, Ibinta, Ekwelle, Aku and so on, Aku being born posthumously. These sons became the founders of the village-groups which now bear their names and which make up the Otanchara clan.

*Ora* died after living to a grand old age. His sons remained in occupation of the place where they were born until some unspecified disaster befell them. This forced them to scatter in different directions. The first son, Ihuwe, who should have inherited his father's compound moved further east towards Uturu until he came to the site where the village-group of that name now stands. There he had seven children — Eziam, Nkoto, Ozara, Agbala, Ogwuwe, Ugwuntu and Akugo which became the founders of the seven villages that make up the group.<sup>21</sup> In theory this genealogical tree could be traced further down to the household level for each of the village-groups in the Otanchara clan.

A literal approach to this micro-prototype of the Bible story which derives all the nations of the earth from Adam and Eve would tell us next to nothing about the character of social consolidation and statesmanship in the early history of the Igbo. If, however, we read the tradition in the reverse order we get a more believable picture of

19. *op. cit.*, p. 29.

20. G.I. Jones, "Dual Organisation", *Africa*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1949.

21. Oral traditions collected by the author.



the successive amalgamations and coalitions of previously scattered and autonomous but neighbouring little kin groups leading to the formation of villages and village-groups and then in most areas clans. Probably in this process no part whatever was played by any single dominating personality. The most important factor which brought about the coalitions and amalgamations was probably the expansion of population which forced hitherto widely separated groups into one another and created the need to regulate the use of farming land to avoid mutually destructive conflicts. Mr Jones has pointed out the part which the desire to direct the drive of each village for land plays in the layout of an Igbo village-group. Says Jones:

The layout of most Northern and Southern Igbo village groups follows a very definite pattern . . . In every case, however, the purpose of the layout remains the same, namely, to allow a number of villages to live reasonably close together as a sign of local community and yet be able to expand without too much friction. It achieves this by zoning them around one or more than one central meeting-place and at the same time giving each village the right to occupy the land extending in a specific direction away from this centre.<sup>22</sup>

It was probably units which were able to work out such an arrangement who came to look upon themselves as brothers. To consolidate this functional co-operation, they probably in time invented a common ancestor and hierarchical order of seniority for the members of the groups.

There are many pointers to the likelihood that the above hypothesis is tenable. The best evidence comes from those portions of Igboland where this process of social consolidation had not reached the clan stage, its normal limit for Igboland, at the time of British advent. Our example comes from the Nike village-group near Enugu, the capital of Anambra State. The villages which make up this confederacy found themselves coming together for defence purposes. After this had been going on for some time, goes the tradition, people from one of the member villages saw a spirit which said its name was *Ani ndi ike* (*Ani Nike*) and that the members of the defence confederation should build it a shrine. This was done and from that day this further cemented the bond of the confederation.<sup>23</sup> The fact is that every segment of each member village of this confederation had its own *Ani* cult which helped to bind it together. It is, therefore, likely that after the coalition had proved its usefulness and stood the test of time, the members decided to provide it with the supreme integrating agency they could think of—*Ani* cult—to which the *Ani* of the different segments became subordinate, thus emphasizing the subordination of the member villages to the confederation. Probably if this integration had gone further the ideology of descent from a common founding father might have superseded that based on the worship of a common Earth Force, *Ani Nike*. Dr E. Ardner has shown, through a study of the *Mba-ise* that this process of converting alliances of convenience into putative descent groups has not entirely ceased to characterize Igbo statemanship. "The identification of a lineage with a locality", he said, "means that if contiguous areas are united today for some common purpose, such as to support a native treasury

22. G.I. Jones, "Ibo Land Tenure", *Africa*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1949.

23. W.R.G. Horton, "God, Man and Land in a Northern Ibo Village-Group", *Africa*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1956.

or to form a constituency, the new unit begins to think of itself as having a community of descent *vis-à-vis* other similarly constituted groups.<sup>24</sup>

If the autonomous Igbo village-groups of the pre-colonial days emerged as a result of successive stages of amalgamations and unions of previously isolated neighbouring kin groups, one would be justified to postulate that from very early days the Igbo area was occupied by scattered autonomous groups. Then as the population expanded the empty spaces in-between groups were filled in. As this happened and these groups came into contact then amalgamations and unions started. Most likely this population expansion was brought about by the change over from food gathering to food production. At what date this transition took place in Igboland we do not know. This is one of the unsolved problems of the archaeology of Igboland. But it would appear, however, that by the last century B.C., social integration in Igboland had attained at least, the village stage. The complicated argument on which this suggestion is based cannot be gone into here.

Howbeit we can posit, on the basis of the present state of our knowledge, that probably the next important stage in the evolution of Igbo society was the rise of what may be loosely designated the Nri civilization. The historical reality of this civilization could be considered confirmed by Professor Shaw's excavations at Igbo-Ukwu, the report of which is contained in his two monumental volumes entitled *Igbo-Ukwu: An Account of Archaeological Discoveries in Eastern Nigeria* (Faber and Faber 1970). At what point in time this culture came into existence we do not yet know for certain. But this must be many centuries before the 9th century A.D., the date of the artifacts recovered by Professor Shaw during his excavations at Igbo Ukwu. It is clear that the culture which produced the Igbo-Ukwu artifacts would need centuries of growth to attain the stage at which it would be capable of that high level of artistic workmanship.

Following the earlier tradition of Jeffreys whose writings on Igboland were highly vitiated by the Hamitic hypothesis and the diffusionist fad, Shaw considered his Igbo-Ukwu culture and the Nri Igbo who remarkably preserve traces of that culture as "indicating an intrusive culture from a northerly direction".<sup>25</sup> This view has been criticized elsewhere by the present writer.<sup>26</sup> Until the existence of centre earlier than Igbo-Ukwu with a basically identical culture has been established in Nigeria or around the regions outside of Igboland, scientific method requires that we should not rule out the possibility of that civilization having originated around the area Shaw excavated. However, for our present purpose the more important aspect of the matter is the role of this ancient culture in the development of Igbo society.

The ancient culture of Igbo-Ukwu was centred around a highly ritualized priest-king, and based on a diversified economy depending on agriculture, hunting and a far-flung trade in which locally produced goods like ivory and slaves, were exchanged for goods coming probably from as far away as Venice and India. There is also evidence which suggests that this culture, and through it Igbo society at large, was closely linked through regional markets as well as through other economic and social

24. E. Ardner, "Lineage and Locality", *Africa*, Vol. 29, No. 12, 1959.

25. T. Shaw, *Igbo Ukwu*, p. 27.

26. A.E. Afigbo, "On the Threshold of Igbo History" being a review of Shaw's *Igbo Ukwu* in *Conch* Vol. 3, No. 2, 1971.

contacts with neighbouring non-Igbo peoples. Traditions surviving among the Nri today would seem to indicate that this culture had also evolved a highly complex cosmology which would help to explain why its carriers came to establish over much of Igboland a ritual hegemony which remained a factor of great importance in Igbo society until recently. Nri became and remained "the centre of a cult connected with the installation of chiefs, purifications and title-making".<sup>27</sup> The priests and diviners of Nri acquired the right to travel unmolested throughout Igboland performing important ritual and social ceremonies.

According to Professor Onwuejeogwu, it would appear that the influence of this culture was already spreading to the other parts of Igboland by the first century of the Christian era. In any case Nri influence probably remained one of the most important factors in Igboland until about the 16th century. Among other things it would appear to have aided the process of social consolidation which was already going on in most areas. It would also appear to have penetrated beyond Igboland. The Nri claim to have founded Idah (or rather the Igala monarchy), while the Igala claim that their first *Asadu* was a renowned Igbo hunter. As the Igbo are not great hunters it has been suggested elsewhere by the present writer that this tradition probably refers to the influence of Nri diviners and priests in Igala before the emergence of the kingdom.<sup>28</sup> The Nri also claim to have had ritual functions to perform in the coronation of the Obas of Benin. This at least would indicate early contact with, or awareness of the existence of Benin.

In any case the role of the Nri in the making of Igbo culture can hardly be over emphasized. And it is quite possible that it was the penetration of this highly ritualized culture into Igbo communities east and west of the Niger that has survived in the traditions of these communities in the dramatized form of founding fathers who started their wanderings from the Nri-Awka area or in any case from communities on its periphery which no doubt became subsidiary centres for the diffusion of elements of this culture. Here it may be revealing to note that in the Otanchara tradition summarized above, Ora, the legendary ancestor of the group, is said to have brought along with him the traditions of *Igbu Ichi* (facial scarification) and *Ibi Mbibi* (the tattooing of the abdomen, ankles, arms, etc.). These are highly developed cultural traits among the Nri.

From Nri traditions it would also appear that another early factor important in the formation of Igbo society was iron technology which attained its highest development in Igboland probably around Awka first. Archaeology is still to establish the age of iron technology in Igboland. The earliest evidence for the introduction of iron into Nigeria has been found at Taruga Abuja and this has been carbon-dated to 440 ± 140 B.C. It has been suggested that the knowledge of iron "may have been slow" in penetrating into the forest area in which the Igbo are located.<sup>29</sup> Judging from Nri traditions, the knowledge of iron must have been introduced quite early in the history

27. The phrase is from Dr Dr Barry Floyd, op. cit., p. 29.

28. A.E. Afigbo, "Nsukka from Earliest Times to 1951: A Political History" A paper presented at a Seminar on Nsukka organized by the Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka between February 6 and 12.

29. G. Connah, "The Coming of Iron: Nok and Daima" in T. Shaw (ed.), *Lectures on Nigerian Prehistory and Archaeology* Ibadan, 1969.

of Nri culture. According to one version of these traditions when Eri came down from the sky he found that the land was a morass. He complained to *Chi Ukwu* who then sent an Awka blacksmith from the sky with his bellows, fire, charcoal and all to dry the land. For this Eri gave the Awka man an ofo to confirm him in the profession of blacksmithing.<sup>30</sup>

For the Igbo, as for any other people so far known, the coming of iron was a great event. It facilitated the fight against the forest environment in which they lived as well as improved farming, hunting and the art of warfare. Blacksmithing was a ritualized profession which entitled its practitioners to certain privileges, like the right to travel far and wide in pursuit of their calling unmolested. And the Awka smiths enjoyed these rights. Probably at first they began their peregrinations in the company of Nri diviners and doctors until they had established for themselves a position of indispensability amongst the farming populations of these regions after which they were able to travel on their own. In time too they started settling in different parts of Igboland, and even beyond it, to ply their trade instead of just carrying about, from one market to the other, items manufactured back home in Awka. These Awka 'colonies' were neither large nor permanent. They usually comprised one or two Awka master-craftsmen with their apprentices who maintained regular contact with home according to an ancient tradition. Whether the Awka were behind the rise of other blacksmithing communities in Igboland is one of the unsolved questions of Igbo history. But in time there developed among Nkwerre of old Orlu division and the Abiriba of the Cross River Igbo smithing communities of renown. More intensive research might in time also reveal how old the smithing tradition in those two communities was, but oral tradition takes them far back into the distant past. When the first Europeans penetrated these parts they were to find Awka smiths ranging as far south-west as the Isoko country, the Nkwerre smiths as far south as Ogoni, the Abiriba all over the Cross River area, while central Igboland was fully penetrated by the three, with the Awka blacksmiths enjoying the primacy of place.

### The Igbo and their Neighbours

These factors indigenous to Igboland—the Nri civilization with its northern-oriented trade routes, and the iron smiths—would appear, from the present state of our knowledge, to have been the most important agencies in the evolution of Igbo society until about the 15th century when other influences originating from outside started affecting the trend of Igbo development. These forces external to Igboland could be grouped into two—the expansion of the Benin and Igala kingdoms and then the rise of the Atlantic trade. The origin of the Benin monarchy has been traced to the period about 1300 but probably not until about the 15th century was that state transformed from a small kingdom into an aggressively expansive empire. This change is said to have taken place in the reign of Ewuare the Great. "He can", argues Professor Ryder, "indeed be regarded as the founder of Benin's reputation as a formidable military power, and of its empire. Under his command the Benin armies extended their

30. M.D.W. Jeffreys, "The Umundri Tradition of Origin", *African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1956.



conquests beyond the Edo regions, subjugation towns and villages of Ekiti, Ikare, Afenmai and the Western Ibo".<sup>31</sup>

It would appear that from this time Bini power became a factor of great consequence in the life of the western Igbo. But the exact nature of this influence, how much of it was direct, how much indirect, how much of it was political and administrative and how much was social, cultural and economic, that is informal, still awaits its historian. So far the tradition has been to state vaguely and rather unhelpfully that the power of Benin extended to the right bank of the Niger and down to the Niger Delta. But there are unexploited traditions among the western Igbo and Ijo which suggest that though Benin influence was great in the area, it probably never amounted to permanent subjugation and regular administration.<sup>32</sup> It is quite possible that these traditions which seem to minimize Benin's political role among the Ika Igbo represent a recent micro-nationalism flowering into historical revisionism. At the same time the earlier orthodoxy of the Benin empire having embraced the western banks of the Niger may well have been equally an exaggeration since it was based largely on Edo traditions. It was favoured and played up by imperial administrators and anthropologists who would appear to have been impatient with 'atomized' communities and who were at pains to explain the fact that the western Igbo show undeniable evidence of intensive political acculturation from Benin. The view was later taken up by macro-nationalistic Africans who probably saw it as another example of the splendour that was ancient Africa and as a pointer to the reality of the new and greater Africa ahead. However, the importation of modern historical scholarship into Africa requires that the exact limits of the Benin empire be determined and that in doing this all traditions and evidences relating to the past which still survive in all the communities concerned be collected and critically evaluated. So far only the Edo side of the story has been told.

Benin's political dominion in the western Igbo area may be a matter for dispute but not the impact of its social and political culture. Everywhere in this region micro-cosmic versions of Benin kingdom, court ceremonials and institutions, title systems and even political terminology were adopted (or some would say imposed). This influence went beyond the Niger to such riverine communities as Onitsha, Osomari, Oguta and so on.<sup>33</sup> This later Benin impact came to overlay the earlier Nri culture among the western Igbo. As mentioned above with regard to the Nri impact, the coming of Bini political and social culture, with its emphasis on centralized leadership and bureaucratic officials hierarchically ranked, marked such a political revolution in Igbo life that it has survived in the traditions of many groups in the dramatic form of little bands of aristocratic Benin culture carriers who conquered the indigenous Igbo populations and imposed their rule. This is probably what one should make of the myriads of claims to Benin origin found in many parts of the western Igbo area and in the delta. Benin expansion and campaigns eastwards were also a matter of some demographic consequence for the Igbo, leading to a recoil of the population that was

31. A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897*, London, 1969, p. 11.

32. I am grateful to Mr K.O.K. Onyioha and Mr N.N. Onyebuho both of whom have done extensive work in recording Igbo traditions for drawing my attention to the traditions referred to here.

33. I. Nzimiro, 'Chieftaincy and Politics in Four Niger States', Ph.D. Cambridge, 1966.



probably hitherto expanding westwards. The Onitsha who claim to have left Benin in the 17th century were probably just elements of this Igbo population thrown back eastwards by Benin expansion.

Apart from the Benin influence there was the Igala influence from the north-west direction of the Igbo area. The origin of the Idah kingdom has been traced to about the 15th century. By the 17th century it had become a great influence to reckon with in the north-western Igbo area. But, of course, contact between the Igala and Igbo went beyond the period of the Igala kingdom. As already mentioned Nri culture would appear to have embraced portions of Igalaland up to Idah, at least the traditions of the two peoples give such hints. But in the 17th and 18th centuries Igala influence would appear to have become the dominant factor in this culture contact and interaction. Some have been inclined to insist that the Igala conquered and administered the northern Nsukka area. Among the Nsukka there are traditions of a series of Igala military actions on the area centred around a legendary figure called Onu Ojo Ogboni, a giant who was reputed to have six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot.

The legendary figure, Onu Ojo Ogboni, occurs also in the traditions of many other peoples like the Idoma and the Urhobo.<sup>34</sup> One is inclined to interpret these events as raids for slaves which the Igala took down the Niger to the delta for sale to the Ijo middlemen. Whatever the character of this Igala influence, it led to a whole series of cultural borrowings by the Igbo, especially in vocabulary, titles and other social institutions like masquerades and facial marks. The Nsukka and Nike areas of the northern Igbo, for instance, appropriated the Igala word *Atama* for their priests. The Nsukka also borrowed Igala titles to add to their earlier Nri system of *ozo* and *eze*. The contact which was built up between the two peoples in this period was so close that it became the tradition for the Nsukka elite taking titles to go to Idah as part of the ceremony of initiation. The impact of this contact on the Igala is outside the scope of this chapter.

In the second half of the 15th century Portuguese adventurers entered the Bight of Biafra, thus inaugurating the contact between these parts and Europe which, beginning as a trickle, later developed into a raging storm. The process by which this contact came to register its impact on the Igbo in the interior is still to be clearly mapped out. But there is probably no doubt that by the latter part of the 16th century by which time the trans-Atlantic slave trade had become an established and going concern, that the southern and Cross River Igbo were beginning to feel, in a manner that could no longer be ignored, the presence of European traders on the coast, or that faint tremours of this impact were spreading into the far interior. European writers of the colonial era grouping in the dark for some explanation of Igbo socio-political organization and psychology came to regard the trans-Atlantic slave trade as holding another important key to the 'mystery' of Igbo historical development. Relying on the

34. C.K. Meek, *Ethnographical Report on the Peoples of Nsukka Division*, 1931. A.J. Shelton, "Onojo Ogboni", *Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 18, No. 321. S.C. Ukpabi, "Nsukka Before the Establishment of British Administration", *Odu* (New Series), No. 6 Oct. 1971. D.C. Ugwu, *This is Nsukka*, Apapa, 1964. J.S. Boston, "Notes on Contact between the Igala and the Ibo" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol 2, December, 1960. *The Igala Kingdom*, Oxford, 1968.

accounts of slave captains who never set foot on Igboland but depended on hearsay for what they wrote, these colonial officials came to the conclusion that since most of the slaves exported from the Bight of Biafra were said to be Igbo, that Igbo society must have suffered immeasurable damage and dislocation from the slave trade and specifically that Igbo socio-political fragmentation must have been owed to the incessant raids and counter-raids which that trade must have inspired and encouraged.<sup>35</sup> Later scholars have rather uncritically, used this cheaply attractive 'disaster' thesis to explain the current demographic map of Igboland. Thus they argue that the low population density of the Aba area relative to that of the Awka, Orlu and Okigwi areas derived largely from the fact that the former area lay on one of the two main slave routes of the Aro.<sup>36</sup> A detailed refutation of this view cannot be gone into here. But it has to be pointed out that there is no evidence that the Igbo slaves who were shipped to the New World were procured mainly by means of slave raids as earlier thought, or even mainly by means of the oracles as lately suggested. Had raids and wars been such a common feature of Igbo life from the 16th century to the eve of the colonial era, Igbo society should have been more visibly, militarized than the early imperial officers saw it. The researches of Dr M.D.W. Jeffreys have shown that it was not in fact militarized.<sup>37</sup>

But this is not to say that the slave trade was not a factor of great significance in the evolution of Igbo society. It introduced exotic though mostly perishable goods into Igbo society, some of these becoming status symbols which no doubt helped to reinforce the competitive feature of Igbo social life. For instance with the introduction of swords and guns, it became a mark of successful manhood to own these articles. It brought the Igbo into closer contact with their neighbours, especially with the Ijo and the Efik to the south through whom the victims of the slave trade were exported. How far the Ijo depended on direct raids or on supply from Igbo brokers and middlemen to their rear for their supply of slaves is still to be revealed by research. But since the Ijo and the Efik retained many slaves for household use, many Igbo and elements of their culture were absorbed into Ijo and Efik society. Among the Ijo this in time came to create an 'Igbo peril'—the danger of indigenous Ijo culture being swamped by the culture of the servile Igbo elements. One of the methods by which the Ijo fought this trend has been analysed in some detail by Professor Horton.<sup>38</sup> In any case, by the 19th century many Ijo families had Igbo blood in their veins, and in the Degema (New

35. For a summary of these views and a refutation of them see A.E. Afigbo: *The Warrant Chiefs*, London 1972, Chapter 1.

36. B. Floyd, op. cit. pp. 34-44.

37. Talbot and Mulhall, *The Physical Anthropology of Southern Nigeria*, Cambridge, 1962, p. 5. "Among the internal causes of depopulation", they have argued, "active conflicts have not been important and were in the great majority of cases limited to inter-village conflicts about ownership of land. If these went far enough to reach the stage of actual conflict, fighting was for the most part on a minor scale and any fatal casualties that resulted from it were few". S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Inter-group Relations", *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1958, p. 304. Here he argues: "On the basis of only meagre evidence, it seems likely that most of the slaves who came into Aro hands were from sources not directly associated with their oracle, and that those who became slaves following oracular consultations formed a much smaller group".

38. R. Horton, "Igbo: An Ordeal for Aristocrats", *Nigeria Magazine* No. 90, September, 1966.

Calabar) area, many of them spoke Igbo as a second language. It is noteworthy that early in this century when the missionaries were seeking to evolve a standard form of Igbo out of the many Igbo dialects, the Bonny dialect of Igbo was one of the five out of which the ill-fated *Union Igbo* grew, yet Bonny is an Ijo community.

But probably the most important impact of his trans-Atlantic trade factor on Igbo history was the rise of a number of indigenous Igbo business oligarchies whose livelihood came to rest, if not entirely, at least mainly, on activities linked to this trade. The most prominent among these was the Aro oligarchy.<sup>39</sup> So much has been written on the Aro, yet the Aro role in the history of the Igbo and their neighbours remains to be clarified. This is largely because much of the writing on the Aro has centred on the problem of their origin, an issue which has been bedevilled by the fact that people have often confused the problem of Aro origin as a clan of the Igbo with the problem of their emergence as an organized trading interest.

Here we can only state that exploiting their strategic location on the border land between the Igbo, Ibibio and the Cross River peoples, the Aro came to prominence as traders and oracle agents about the middle of the 17th century. In time they built up an intricate trading network covering the former Eastern Region of Nigeria and even penetrating into the areas occupied by the Idoma, Igala and some peoples of the western delta. A tradition has recently come to light that Chima, the legendary ancestor of the Onitsha people, who the latter believed to have been a Benin refugee, was an Aro oracle agent and slave dealer. Chima is a name encountered mostly among the Aro, but this tradition just referred to requires further detailed and critical investigation. In pursuit of their expanding business, the Aro started establishing settlements in many Igbo and Ibibio areas, as well as building up trade and defence pacts with other oligarchies and groups like the Awka, and Nkwerre smiths already mentioned, the Ohaffia-Abam-Eda confederacy of head hunters, the Nike and Abakaliki of the northern and northeastern Igbo and so on. Probably borrowing a leaf from the Aro, the Awka evolved an oracle of their own called *Agbala* and combined their smithing business with being the agents of their oracle. The success of these two oracles later led to the proliferation of oracles in other parts of Igboland—at Umuneha where there was *Igwé-ka-Ala*, at Ozuzu where there was *Agbara*, and so

39. The material here on the Aro and other oligarchies is taken from the following sources amongst many others:

- (i) A.E. Afigbo, "The Aro of Southeastern Nigeria" in two parts, *African Notes*, Vol. 6 No. 2 1970/71 and Vol. 7 No. 1 1971/72.
- (ii) Reports on the Aro by H.F. Mathews, Anthropological Officer Southern Nigeria, written between 1926 and 1928 and now contained in the following files at Enugu Archives:
  - (a) Arodist 1/7/31
  - (b) Arodist 1/7/33
  - (c) A.D. 635.
- (iii) G.I. Jones, "Who Are the Aros?", *Nigerian Field*, Vol. viii, 1939.
- (iv) (a) Simon Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles etc." loc. cit. (b) "The System of Authority of the Afikpo Ibo in Eastern Nigeria", Ph.D. Northwestern, 1957.
- (v) Rosemary Harris, *The Political Organization of Mbembe of Nigeria* London, 1966.
- (vi) P.A. Talbot, (a) *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria* 4 Vols., Oxford, 1929. (b) *Tribes of the Niger Delta* Lond., 1932. (c) *In The Shadow of the Bush*, London, 1912. (d) *Life in Southern Nigeria*.

on. No full inventory of the oracles which operated in Igboland by the 19th century has yet been made.<sup>40</sup>

The links which these oligarchies and groups established with one another, reinforcing the usual conjugal, economic and other links existing between villae and village, clan and clan<sup>41</sup> constituted Igboland into what might loosely be called an 'informal commonwealth'. The coming and going which these links encouraged ensured the distribution of goods and articles of culture from one part of Igboland to the other. This helps to explain the striking uniformity in culture and language which existed in Igboland in spite of the fact that the people never came under the umbrella of one state. But the homogeneity of culture mentioned above must be interpreted in the broadest terms. It must not be seen as an attempt to obscure or obliterate the differences which existed between one zone and the other. The anthropologists using their own criteria, have divided the Igbo into five broad sub-cultural groups—northern, southern, western, eastern and north-eastern Igbo—each of which again has its own sub-divisions. The terms used are geographical, but the groups so described have a number of traits which distinguish them from one another.<sup>52</sup> In the area of political organization, for instance, the present writer has shown that, though the underlying principles and structures were basically similar, a more rigorous micro-analysis would reveal the existence of at least four types.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from constituting important integrative agencies among the Igbo, these oligarchies and their institutions (especially the oracles) linked the Igbo effectively with their neighbours. This was particularly so with the Aro who operated as commercial and ritual agents among the Ibibio, the Ijo, the Cross River peoples, the Idoma, the Igala, and with the Abriha who were not unknown (if also notorious) on the Cross River.

It is thus certain that Igbo society and culture did not evolve in isolation from neighbouring societies, but in a situation in which internal developments within it were at times stimulated and at times supplemented by impulses radiated by neighbouring non-Igbo groups. In the same manner Igbo impact on their neighbours was not insignificant. The mere density and size of Igbo population, Igbo commercial enterprise and a certain uncanny genius for establishing oracles of wide-ranging repute, were some of the factors which made the Igbo a force to be reckoned with in pre-19th century southern Nigeria. This at least is the picture of Igboland around 1800 presented by a critical study of the material now available to scholars.

40. For a preliminary attempt see S. Ottemberg, "Ibo Oracles etc.", loc. cit.

41. V.C. uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*.

42. See (1) Forde and Jones: *The Igbo and Ibibio-speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria*, London 1950. (2) C.K. Meek, *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*, Oxford, 1937.

43. A.E. Afigbo, "The Indigenous Political Systems of the Igbo", *Tarikh*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1973, pp. 13-23.

## THE PEOPLES AND KINGDOMS OF THE DELTA PROVINCE

OBARO IKIME

The Delta Province of Nigeria occupies very roughly the area enclosed by longitudes  $5^{\circ}$  and  $6^{\circ} 45'$  East and latitudes  $4^{\circ} 40'$  and  $6^{\circ} 10'$  North. In a sense the name Delta Province is apt, for the riverine peoples of the province—the Ijo, the Itsekiri and the Aboh—do, in fact, inhabit what can be roughly described as the western delta of the Niger. Other peoples of the province are the Isoko, the Ukwuani and the Urhobo. Although by comparison with the Ijo, Itsekiri and Aboh this latter group of peoples can be described as 'up country' peoples, the deltaic swamps spread to a large of the Aboh and Isoko countries as well as to some parts of the Urhobo country.

By and large, however, the province can be divided into two zones—the lower delta, the home of the Ijo, the Itsekiri and the Aboh and the upper delta inhabited by the Isoko, Urhobo and Ukwuani. The distinguishing feature of the former is the dense mangrove vegetation through which meanders a network of creeks. The latter zone falls within the evergreen forest belt dominated by the oil palm tree.

This division of the province into two natural vegetation types has been an important factor in determining the relations between the peoples of the province, in so far as their occupational pursuits have been determined by their varying natural habitats. Thus the lower delta dwellers were and continue to be fishermen, makers of salt and earthenware, canoes and, where the situation permitted, middlemen traders. The dwellers in the hinterland naturally took to agriculture and the exploitation of the oil palm tree, though some engaged in fishing. The exchange of the products of their various occupations thus constituted an early determinant of inter-group relations; the 'water people' had fish, crayfish and salt to offer the land people while the latter offered in return yams, plantains, pepper, and the various products of the cassava plant. As from the 16th century slaves from 'up country' also became an important commodity in the commercial transaction between the two groups.

### Origins

From the list of peoples already given, it is obvious that the delta province is rather heterogeneous. Of the six groups, the Aboh and Ukwuani have linguistic and other affinities as do the Urhobo and Isoko. Despite this fact, however, each group has tended to regard itself as a separate entity, independent of the next. Even within each group, the awareness of belonging together is a recent development. It is, in the view of the present writer, extremely doubtful whether in the period covered by this chapter



this awareness had developed in all the groups. The heterogeneity of the ethnic composition of the province, together with the fragmented nature of each ethnic group, makes it difficult to go into details of traditions of origin in a work of this nature. Yet a few words must be said about the origins of these peoples.

Itsekiri traditions of origin tend to concentrate on what has come to be known as the Iginuwa migration from Benin during the reign of *Oba* Olua which Egharevba dates to about 1473. The story is that Iginuwa, Olua's prince and heir, became so unpopular in Benin, as a consequence of the wicked advice he gave to his father, that the Bini made up their mind that they would not have him succeed his father.

Olua became aware of this and so arranged to send his son to found a separate kingdom for himself. The *Oba* therefore, having previously made adequate preparations, asked his chiefs to send their sons with Iginuwa to offer a sacrifice on his behalf by the 'sea'. The chiefs acceded to the *Oba*'s request. When Iginuwa and the chiefs' sons arrived at the 'sea', Ijo men were waiting to take them out in canoes. Thus began the journey which ended, according to this tradition, with the founding of the Itsekiri kingdom. Egharevba claims that the title *Olu* which the Itsekiri use for their ruler is, in fact, derived from the name Olua, Iginuwa's father.<sup>1</sup>

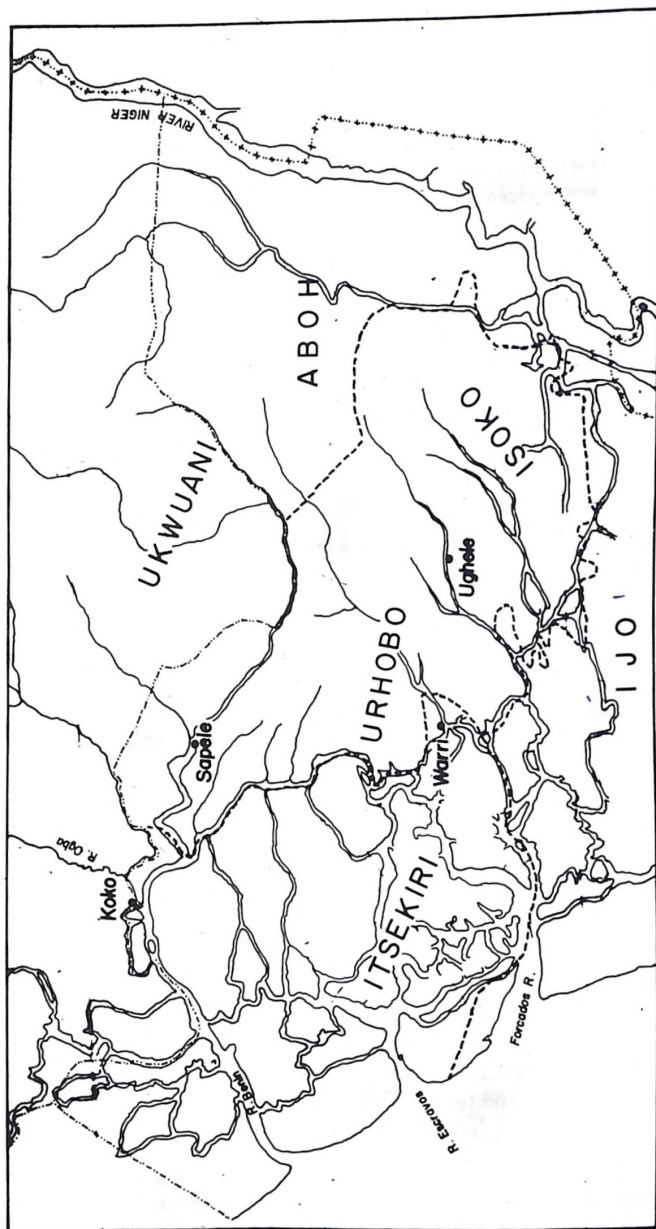
William Moore who wrote a history of the Itsekiri in the 1930s claims that the Iginuwa migration met on arrival certain mythical beings whom he calls *umale*. Most of these fled on Iginuwa's arrival. Some stayed behind and accepted Iginuwa's leadership. Indeed Moore claims that *Itsekiri* was the name of one of these beings who was so hospitable to Iginuwa that the latter chose to call the new kingdom after him.<sup>2</sup> While the historian may dismiss the mythical *umale*, what Moore's version indicates is that there were people already inhabiting the area into which Iginuwa and his party moved. Some accepted him probably because they were impressed by the royal regalia which Iginuwa possessed, modelled as it was after the *Oba* of Benin's. Others moved away to new areas. Moore also claims that at the time of Iginuwa's migration certain Ijo and Urhobo elements were already settled in the neighbourhood.<sup>3</sup>

Whoever inhabited the area at the time of the Iginuwa migration would have been fisher folk. A look at the map of the area shows a network of creeks linking the Itsekiri country to the Ijo country and to the Yoruba of Ondo and Ijebu areas. Both before and after the Iginuwa migration there must have been quite some movement and contact between these various groups. The Itsekiri kingdom as it developed must thus have fused within itself Benin, Ijo, Urhobo and Yoruba elements. The society which emerged is distinctly Edo because of close contact with Benin, after the Iginuwa migration. The language which has survived, however, is akin to Yoruba, indicating therefore that the Yoruba element in the early Itsekiri kingdom may have been considerable. There is also the fact that the Benin court may have been bilingual for some time after the coming of the Ife prince and that therefore the royal party from Benin may have spoken Yoruba as well as Edo.

1. For traditions of Itsekiri origins, see J.U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, Ibadan 1960, pp. 22-23. William Moore, *History of Itsekiri*: P.C. Lloyd, *The Itsekiri*, London, 1957; C.O. Omoneukarin, *Itsekiri Law and Custom*, Lagos, 1942, pp. 13-18; Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, London, 1969, pp. 31-33.

2. Moore, *op. cit.* pp. 16-17, 20-21.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.



Peoples & Kingdoms of the Western Delta

The Ijo who are neighbors to the Itsekiri in the mangrove belt of the western delta have various traditions of origin. They fall into thirteen groups or *Ibe* as Dr Alagoa calls them. Of these five—Beni, Tarakiri, Kabowei, Kumbowei and mein—have traditions which link them with Benin though not necessarily as a place of immediate origin. Thus the Tarakiri tradition speak of Ondo, father of Tarakiriwei who lived in Benin but who was forced to move away on account of the Oba's hostility. He is said to have settled at some place near the site of Aboh for some time before he moved on to the Sagbama creek area from where further migration took place, resulting in the founding of the Tarakiri *Ibe* in its present location. Although the Mein claim Benin as a place of ultimate origin, the *Ibe* moved to its present location from Ogobiri in the Sagbama creek area. The Beni tradition is interesting as it is the only one which mentions *Ijo* as the name of a person. According to this tradition, Ijo, the eponymous ancestor, left Benin during one of Benin's many wars and settled somewhere near the Aboh area. Ijo died there and his son Orumo lived there for some time before he was forced to move away as a consequence of the hostility of Aboh. He moved to Torobenii where Iyakiri, Orumo's son, was born. Iyakiri later founded Ibeni on an inaccessible creek, the Kunu creek. The new settlement was named after Beni, Iyakiri's wife, and it is that name that *Ibe* has adopted.

Most of the other eight *Ibe*'s trace their origins to the eastern and central delta, to *some* Ijo group already settled in those parts. Thus Ekeremo, the founder of the Operemo *ibe* migrated from Operemo in the eastern delta. The Gbaramatu *ibe* traces its origins to the town of Gbara in the Brass area. One *ibe*, Seimbiri, asserts that the ancestor was from Egypt, that he lived in Benin for a while before he and his people migrated to the Niger and ultimately founded the Seimbiri *ibe*.<sup>4</sup> A number of interesting issues arise from these traditions. These are discussed later.

Five Urhobo clans have traditions which link them with some of the Ijo. The Ughelle clan was, it is claimed, founded by Ogele, a son of the founder of the Tarakiri *ibe* who moved farther afield as a consequence of pressure of population on the original settlement. With him went two brothers, Agbarha and Ogo who founded settlements now named after them. Ogele, however, was accepted by these other two as the senior. The three settlements are sometimes referred to as the Owaha clan. Ughelle traditions today confirm this version of their origin and 'Tarakiri' is still used at formal gatherings as a kind of salutation.

The clans of Ughienvwé and Ewu are said to have been founded from Ogobiri. According to the traditions Ughienvwé and Ogobiri were brothers who lived first at Ogobiri before some disagreement with their kinsmen forced them to move out. They followed the creeks down to the Bomadi area where they settled for a while before they moved on to found the two Urhobo clans which bear their names.

The Uwherun traditions speak of a Bini who was father to Uwherun, the founder of the clan. Uwherun is said to have fled from Benin (presumably at a time when his father was already dead) because his men had accidentally killed one of the Benin

4. The account of Ijo origins given here is based on oral traditions as recorded in the Intelligence Reports on various Ijo clans written in the 1930s by British administrative staff. These reports can be found at the National Archives, Ibadan, C.S.O. 26 series—see Files 27324, 27342, 29182, 29184, for example; and also on E.J. Alagoa, "Ijo origins and migrations in Nigeria Magazine, No. 91, Dec. 1966, pp. 279-88.

princes during a war. Two of his brothers, Utuo and Motolo, were among those who joined him in flight. The traditions indicate that the three brothers settled somewhere in the eastern delta. While Utuo and Matolo stayed permanently in the delta, Uwherun moved on from there to found what is now the Urhobo clan which bears his name.

The Urhobo clan of Uvwie (Effurun, would appear to have been founded by a mixed group. Ijo traditions claim that Evhro-Oto was founded by a migration from Gbaramatu. However, Evhro (Effurun) traditions claim that Evhro was founded by immigrants from Erohwa in the Isoko country. The people speak a language that bears a striking resemblance (at least from the point of view of the layman) to the Erohwa tongue, and the Evhro town shrine and festivals are also very closely related to Erohwa's. It may well be that both Ijo and Erohwa elements fused in Evhro.

Of the remaining Urhobo clans, Abraka, Agbon, Orogun and Olomu claim to have been founded from Benin. It must be stated, however, that close questioning of the elders fails to produce any great details other than the general claim that the founding ancestors moved away from Benin on account of the Oba's hostility or for fear of punishment after some misdemeanour. The Olomu traditions also indicate that at some point Igbo elements moved into the area and were assimilated into the population. Agbon traditions also speak of Iriwi in the Isoko country as a place of immediate origin, though they take care to point out that those who founded Iriwi were from Benin. The Urhobo clan of Ewreni is said to have been founded by Igbo elephant hunters hired in the first instant by the Isoko clan of Iyede. The Agbarho clan is perhaps the youngest in terms of foundation, it having been founded by a mixed group from the various Urhobo clans.<sup>5</sup>

The Isoko clans of Iyede, Emevo, Owhe, Emede, Aviara, Uzere, Okpe-Ozoro claim a Benin origin. The reasons given for the migrations are the usual ones—hostility of an *Oba*, fleeing from the wrath of the *Oba* for some misdemeanour, and the like. Most of the migrations were independent movements, though links developed later on. Thus for example both the Owhe and Emevo groups settled for a while with the Iyede before increasing population and other pressures forced them to branch out and found separate settlements. Similarly, some traditions claim that before Aviara was finally settled in its present location, Iyede and Erohwa elements joined the Aviara. There exists a special pact of friendship between the Isoko clans of Aviara, Iyede and Erohwa and this tradition may well be an attempt at rationalizing this pact.

The Isoko clans of Enwhe, Igside and Ume are said to be of Igbo origin, the founders having come from the Igbo country. Details of the migrations are rather scanty. Eru, the founder of Igside is said to have stayed in Awka for some time before he moved off to found the present Igside clan. It is, however, not clear why he did not give his name to the clan.

This leaves the Isoko clan of Erohwa, usually regarded by the other Isoko as the *okpako* (the 'eldest') of the Isoko clans.<sup>6</sup> The Erohwa now inhabit two little villages, the

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5. This account of Urhobo traditions is based on my existing works, especially *Niger Delta Rivalry*, pp. 6-10.

6. For Isoko traditions of origin, see Obaro Ikime, *The Isoko People: A Historical Survey*, Ibadan, 1972, pp. 1-18.



mother-village on the Erohwa creek, and Anibeze. Some of the traditions claim that the Erohwa have always been where they are; some that the ancestors were from Ife. There is nothing of either Yoruba language or culture about the Erohwa. Rather the language would seem to have Edo ingredients. The very name Erohwa would seem to have been derived from the Benin expression *Ai ro wa* meaning 'he is not at home'<sup>7</sup> and may indicate that the founding father and his group ceased to feel at home in Benin and had to leave!

Recent studies of the Aboh-Ukwuani peoples show that the various clans which make up the Aboh and Ukwuani peoples are a mixture of people of Igbo and Benin origin. Dr K. Ogedengbe has argued with considerable force that the kingdom of Aboh was founded as a result of a Benin incursion into an area in which Igbo-speaking peoples were already established in little groups.<sup>8</sup> The Bini group succeeded in imposing their political system through conquest but they were conquered linguistically by the Igbo, indicating that the Igbo elements were probably much stronger numerically. The *Obi-ship* of Aboh would thus be explicable in terms of the influence of the political and social institutions of Benin.

The work of the Revd. E. O. Okolugbo on the Ukwuani reveals that many of the Ukwuani clans trace their origin to Benin. According to Okolugbo the first 'wave' of migration into the Ukwuani area is represented by the Umukashiada, Ebedei and Akarai clans and their offshoots. The second 'wave' brought the clans of Abara, Utukoku, Umu-barautchi, Ndoni, Onya and Adai. Finally came a third wave which led to the rise of the Aboh kingdom. All of these 'waves' are seen as coming from Benin.<sup>9</sup> The present writer cannot question Okolugbo's findings based on the traditions related to him. One point, however, is striking and needs to be made. The names of the clans have (from the layman's view point) a distinct Igbo ring. If indeed these names are Igbo, then it would be fair to conclude that among the Ukwuani too there was a mixture of people of Igbo and Benin origins and that in this case the Bini elements failed to impose a Benin-type political structure.

Certain issues arise from the traditions of origins which we have been discussing. First, there is the question of the place of Benin in these traditions. No definitive statement can be made in this regard until a great deal more work is done on the culture, art, religion, language, and so on—of the various groups, to establish similarities and derivations. Having said that, however, one must point out that the tendency to see most of the peoples covered in this chapter as being of Benin origin needs to be carefully examined. It is quite clear that the bulk of the Ijo do not claim origin from Benin. Even those which do, seem also to have had some links with the Ijo of the central and eastern delta. The Aboh and Ukwuani obviously received Benin migrations at some point but whether the Igbo-speaking elements in these areas were themselves originally of Igbo origin, is, from the point of view of the present writer, a

7. This Bini expression was translated for me by Mr. Tayo Akpata, at the time Senior Assistant Registrar at the University of Ibadan, later Commissioner for Education, Mid-Western State of Nigeria.

8. K.O. Ogedengbe, "The Aboh Kingdom of the Lower Niger c. 1650-1900", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971, Chapter 2.

9. E.O. Okolugbo, "Christianity and Ukwuani Traditional Religion: A study in Religious Encounter", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1972, Chapter I.



moot question. If the Itsekiri ruling group was from Benin, those over whom it ruled were, so far as the present evidence indicates, a mixed group which would appear to have included Urhobo, Ijo and Yoruba-speaking elements. The bulk of the Isoko and a number of the Urhobo clans would appear to be definitely of Benin origin as their traditions do not permit any other interpretation. In this connection, however, it is important to recall what Dr Alagoa has said with regard to the Ijo, that where a group no longer remembered its place of origin, it is likely to choose one that was powerful and distant enough to confer on it a kind of prestige or legitimacy while not posing any immediate threat to its political independence.<sup>10</sup> For many of the groups here discussed Benin met this requirement.

As for Benin's influence on the socio-political institutions, the situation is fairly clear. The kingships of the Itsekiri and the Aboh were obviously based on the Benin model, though the Aboh one was modified by prevailing Igbo socio-political arrangements. Among the Urhobo and Isoko (including even those Urhobo which claim Ijo origins) the institution of *ovie* and the various title societies have very strong Benin influence. The Ijo clan of Mein had the institution of *Pere*, the equivalent of the *ovie* of the Urhobo and Isoko which was a title which required the *Oba* of Benin's investiture. What would seem to have happened is that either a Benin group conquered an original set of settlers and so imposed a political system, or groups already settled deliberately went to Benin to 'acquire' some kind of title which conferred greater prestige and legitimacy. The fame of the *Oba* of Benin in the palmy days of the Benin empire was sufficient to explain why groups seeking additional prestige would have gone to Benin to acquire some title. It may well be that Benin influence on the socio-political institutions of some of these groups has tended to result in claims of Benin origin.

Another issue which arises from the discussions of origins is that of dating the migrations. In this connection we do not possess firm evidence. The Iginuwa migration which gave the Itsekiri their ruling house is dated to the reign of *Oba Olua* which, according to J. U. Egharevba, spanned the period 1473-80.<sup>11</sup> If the ruling house therefore emerged towards the end of the 15th century, this is not to say that the various groups who lived in that area before the coming of Iginuwa were not there much earlier on. Alagoa claims that the Ijo are of considerable antiquity in their present location.<sup>12</sup> While he rejects the theory that the Ijo were pushed to their present locations by waves of migrations, the very habitat of the Ijo may well be evidence of their antiquity. Today the Ijo country may not be particularly attractive. In the early days, however, the Ijo probably chose their location deliberately so as to be able to engage in the manufacture of salt and earthenware and to have a reliable means of transport by water. As for the Urhobo, Egharevba places the migrations from Benin in the reign of *Oba Egbeka* which he claims began in 1370.<sup>13</sup> J.W. Hubbard who tried to work from the list of *ivie* dates the Urhobo and Isoko to the closing years of the 16th century.<sup>14</sup> Yet Duarte Pacheco Pereira who visited the River Forcados area at the

10. Alagoa, *op. cit.*

11. Egharevba, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

12. Alagoa, *op. cit.*

13. Egharevba, pp. 13-14.

14. J.W. Hubbard, *Sobo of the Niger Delta*, Gaskiya, 1948, p. 152.

beginning of the 16th century spoke of the 'Subou' people to the hinterland.<sup>15</sup> And Moore claims that at the time of the Iginuwa migration some of the Urhobo were already settled in the area near the Itsekiri country.<sup>16</sup> Given these various strands of information it is difficult to accept Hubbard's dates. For one thing no one has established how long it took the various Urhobo and Isoko clans to develop the institution of *ovie*. While Hubbard's dates may well be meaningful as indicating that the Urhobo and Isoko had developed the office of *ovie* by the closing years of the 16th century, they cannot, in view of such other information as is available, be accepted without question as representing dates of migration. As for the Aboh and Ukwuani, some authorities have placed the Benin migrations in the 15th and others in the 16th century.<sup>17</sup> However, as Benin immigrants would appear to have met other groups who had lived in the area for some time before the arrival of the Bini, the core of the Ukwuani and Aboh peoples would obviously be of greater antiquity than these dates indicate. It is a pity that in the present state of his knowledge the present writer cannot move beyond this kind of uncertainty to more positive datings of the various migrations.

### Social and Political Organizations

Two broad types of social and political institutions are found among the peoples of the Delta Province. These are the kingdoms of Aboh and Itsekiri and the 'fragmented societies' of the Ukwuani, Urhobo, Isoko and Ijo. The basic unit of social and political organization among the latter group is the village group made up of people who claim common descent from a given ancestor through the male line. The village is divided into quarters which are essentially lineage groups usually seen as founded by the various sons of the founder of the village. Each quarter is in turn made up of extended families each of which normally lives within a definite compound. In such a compound would be a man and his wives as well as grown-up sons and their wives and children.

The social and political organization of the Ukwuani, Urhobo, Isoko and Ijo during this period reflected the structure of the village.<sup>18</sup> The smallest unit of social organization was the compound. Here the father was responsible for the maintenance of order and saw to the welfare of the family. Next came the quarter. The maintenance of law and order and the promotion of the welfare of the lineage group was the responsibility of the heads of compounds which comprised the group. At the head of affairs here would be the most senior of these heads who was always well respected.

15. H.T. Kimble's Translation of *Esmeraldo De Situ Orbis* by Duarte Pacheco Pereira, London, 1937, p. 129.

16. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

17. See for example, Egharevba, p. 30.

18. The discussion which follows, about the social and political organization of the Ukwuani, Urhobo, Isoko and Ijo is based on the following works: Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, pp. 19-29; *The Isoko People*, pp. 28-42; "The Western Ijo 1900-1950: A preliminary Historical Survey" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. IV, No. 1, Dec. 1967, pp. 70-72; "Native Administration in Kwaale-Aboh 1928-1950: A Case Study" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. III, No. 4, June 1967, pp. 663-82. Also Okolugbo, Chapter I.

At the village level, there was usually a council of elders responsible for the governance and welfare of the people. These elders—*Ekpako* in Urhobo and Isoko, *Ndokwa* in Ukwuani and *Okosuwei* in Ijo—met to discuss the affairs of the village. With them sat a number of 'officials'. One office common to all four peoples was that of spokesman—*Otota* in Isoko and Urhobo, *Ugo* in Ukwuani and *Ogulasuwei* in Ijo. The spokesman could himself be one of the elders of the village. But he did not have to belong to that age-group as he was chosen for his personal qualities rather than on account of his age. It was the spokesman who, in fact, often dominated the deliberations of the council of elders. When the council sat in its judicial capacity, the spokesman virtually conducted the trial—doing the cross-examination and so on, though any of the elders could cut in at any time. The spokesman was invariably on every delegation that had to hold discussions with outsiders. In view of his many-sided roles in village life, the spokesman was chosen because he possessed a commanding personality, a good speaking voice and a sound knowledge of the people's laws and customs. Another official who sat with the elders in council was the head of the war leaders. In every village the war leaders were usually well known. The Urhobo and Isoko call them *iletu*; the Ukwuani *otu-eti*. Their leader invariably had a seat on the council of elders.

Among the Urhobo and Isoko there are clans which possess the office of *ovie*. While some *ivie* (plural of *ovie*) like the *Orodje* of Okpe and the *Ovie* of Agbon, Ughelle and Ewu, combined in themselves executive and priestly functions, and so were the heads of the clan government, many of the other *ivie*, especially among the Isoko, were essentially clan priests who officiated at clan shrines where they offered sacrifices to the clan gods, the founders, and the departed ancestors. They also presided over the annual festivals of their people. It is difficult to make general statements with regard to the relationship of the *ovie* as high priest of the clan, to the council of elders, as there was great variation from clan to clan. The priestly functions which the *ovie* performed were vital for the well-being and survival of the clan. Therefore the *ovie* could never be ignored. He was always in close touch with the elders but did not always sit in council with them except when very grave issues which called for his specialized knowledge had to be discussed. In other words, among the Isoko, for example, the council of elders was not *egwae-ovie* (the *ovie*'s council). In the Urhobo clans of Ughelle, Okpe and Ewu, however, the council of elders could be referred to as *egware-ovie*.

The Isoko, Urhobo and Ukwuani also possessed titled societies. The Isoko have the *Odio* society. The Urhobo have various societies—the *Ohonwonre*, the *Ade*, the *Okakuro*. Membership of these societies involved the payment of fixed fees and the performance of prescribed ceremonies. Consequently membership of the societies was, to some extent, an index of wealth. Because of this, many men sought to belong to these societies. However, although a mere boy could buy the title or have it bought for him by his father, the effective councils of the societies were usually limited to a fixed number. Hence only the most senior (seniority is judged by length of membership) members constituted the effective councils. Among the Urhobo and Isoko these societies virtually controlled the council of elders because of the prestige which attached to them. Hence in many an Isoko village, one hears of *egwae-edio* (the *edio*'s council) meaning the council of elders. Similarly the *ehonwonre* and other titled men dominate the councils among the Urhobo.

Basic to the social and political organization of the Ukwuani, Ijo, Urhobo and Isoko is the institution of age-sets. The men folk were divided into various age-sets. The most senior of these sets was made up of boys roughly under the age of fifteen. This set was not particularly well organized but the older boys were expected to perform communal duties such as clearing village paths and sweeping public squares and the like. Then there was the age-set made up of the young men up to about forty years. This age-set was the labour-corps of the village. They put up public buildings, markets and the like; they made sure that roads which led from their village to the neighbouring villages were kept in good repair; they provided the bulk of the fighting men during times of war. Each age-set had its own leader and its own spokesman. It held meetings to discuss matters which concerned its members and helped to maintain discipline among its own members.

Between the above age-set and those who were described as elders was another age-set made up of men from about forty to about fifty or fifty-five. Among the Ukwuani they were called *Otunta*, among the Ijo, *Okosuotu*. In previous works the present writer has claimed that this age-set was called *otu-iletu* among the Urhobo and Isoko. Recent research among these two peoples has given rise to doubts as to whether the *iletu* were an *otu* or age-set, since the evidence indicates that the *iletu* were war leaders who were usually limited in numbers. Any way, the function of this age-set was to supervise the work of the immediately younger age-set. This age-set also settled minor disputes between persons and so took some workload off the last age-set—the *Ekpako* of the Urhobo and Isoko, the *Ndokwa* or *Otuku* of the Ukwuani and the *Okosuwei* of the Ijo.

As has been pointed out this last age-set constituted the village council. As men of considerable age and experience, they were seen to possess wisdom and a deep knowledge of the laws and customs of their peoples. Most, if not all, of them were heads of families in which capacity they acted as priests—sacrificing to the gods and ancestors to ensure the welfare of the living members of their families. This priestly function gave them prestige and respect since they were thus seen as the link between the dead and the living. Little wonder then that they were accepted as the rulers of their people.

From the description of the social and political organization of the Ukwuani, Ijo, Urhobo and Isoko given above, a few comments can now be made about the government of these peoples. It is usual to describe their government as a gerontocracy or government by elders. No doubt age did confer certain rights and privileges, such as membership of the council of elders. But it should have become clear by now that other factors counted in deciding the role a man played in his society. It has already been stated that the titled men tended to dominate the council of elders. It was wealth which enabled a man to take a title. So wealth became important. The office of spokesman was based on the possession of certain qualities. The war leaders were chosen for their proven valour in battle and similar trials. Where there was the office of *ovie*, it tended to be hereditary in a certain line. Hence to describe the government of these fragmented societies as a gerontocracy is to over-simplify and over-generalize.

The present writer does not consider it necessary to seek a label for the type of government which these peoples possessed. Having said that, however, it is necessary to stress that in some ways this was more of a government of the people, by the people



and for the people than modern democracies. The council of elders was extremely representative, for virtually every extended family was represented on it. That council met and took decisions. The execution of the decisions was usually the responsibility of the next two younger age-sets who thus got involved in the decisions of the elders. The council's messengers as well as the traditional guards who performed the duty of policemen were also chosen from younger men. Besides, really important issues were never discussed by the council in camera; rather a meeting of the entire village was summoned and all the men, women and children who cared to attend had a chance of knowing what was exercising the minds of their elders, and of joining in the discussion. The age-sets provided an additional platform for discussing crucial issues affecting different groups within the village and passing on the feelings of such groups to the elders through their respective spokesmen. While in such a system talent was clearly recognized (the good orator, for example, almost invariably got audience, and a great warrior would always be listened to in a crisis involving fighting and even in peace time and respected) there was little danger of any one person or small group manipulating the affairs of the village to his or its own particular advantage. Finally, young and old knew fully well that government involved the maintenance of proper relationships not only between persons and persons but between the living and the dead ancestors. Consequently a man's behaviour had to accord with the accepted mores of the society. To ignore these mores was to court not only the disapproval of society but the ire of the gods and ancestors. Consequently power was matched with a regulated sense of responsibility.<sup>19</sup>

We must now turn briefly to the organization of the two kingdoms—the Itsekiri and Aboh kingdoms. First the Itsekiri kingdom. We cannot exactly date the rise of the Itsekiri kingdom but, as has been pointed out earlier, it would appear to have already developed by the middle of the 16th century. The Itsekiri kingdom itself is very compact, made up as it is of the capital of Ode-Itsekiri and a few settlements scattered along the Forcados, Escravos and Benin Rivers. As it finally emerged, the Itsekiri kingdom was ruled by an *Olu* and a council of *Ojoye*—apparently all the seventy sons of Benin nobles who allegedly accompanied Ginuwa took or were given titles. If ever there were seventy titles they are not all now remembered. The more important titles were those of *Ologbotse* (Prime Minister and Chief Adviser to the *Olu*), *Iyasere* (War Lord) *Uwangue* (Custodian of the *Olu's* Regalia and Chief Spokesman in Council). While in theory the *Olu* could confer a title on anyone he judged deserving, the tendency did develop for certain titles to become hereditary within certain families.

These title holders sat in the state council to advise the *Olu* on the running of the kingdom. The *Olu* combined in himself priestly and political functions, for he alone

19. Government among these peoples was all-embracing. The elders-in-council were the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. Justice was thus seen as only an arm of government. Cases were often heard by the elders in the open and all who cared were welcome to watch the proceedings. This was a useful way of learning about the laws and customs of one's people.

One other point needs to be made here. Although we have concentrated on the village or village group, there was a larger unit—the clan. Clan solidarity varied from people to people. For some the clan was important mostly for ritual purposes like the annual festivals. For others there existed a clan council of elders which met only in grave emergencies or to try extremely serious breaches of clan law and custom.



could offer or cause to be offered sacrifices to the departed rulers and the 'national' deities. The ojeye could meet without the *Olu* being present to discuss affairs of state. When this happened the more senior ojeye conveyed the views of the council to the *Olu*.

In theory the *Olu* was not bound to accept the advice of his council. In practice, everything was done to avoid conflict. Where the *Olu* disagreed with his council in what appeared like major issues, conflict was often avoided by referring the matter to an oracle, the pronouncement of which was regarded as final. As there was not just one but several priests who could be called in to offer this kind of service, there did not develop a priestly class that could effectively undermine the *Olu's* position. Needless to say, however, the choice of which priest to consult was a matter open to considerable joggling. From all the available evidence it seems fair to conclude that the *Olu* and council as distinct from the *Olu*-in-council constituted the supreme legislative, executive and judicial body for all Itsekiriland.

At the village level affairs were directed by the elders headed by the *Olare-aja* (literally, 'the eldest man of the land') and the *Okpanran* (priest). Often the oldest member of the founder's patrilineage functioned as *olare-aja*, whether he was in fact the oldest man in the community or not. Disputes, etc., which could not be settled by the village elders were sent to the *Olu's* council.<sup>20</sup>

The present writer is not sure about the extent of the Aboh kingdom as it developed. It was apparently powerful enough to have influence over most of the riverain clans as well as some upland clans. The Intelligence Report compiled by the British in the 1930s lists Ogume, Ashaka, Ama, Ossissa, Afo, Adiai, Aso, Umuolu, Okpai, Utuoku, Akarai and Onya, as some of the clans which recognized the authority of the *Obi* of Aboh, as the king was styled. These were among the clans which constituted the Aboh district under British rule.

Aboh itself, it would be recalled, was of mixed population. The Edo immigrants conquered earlier immigrants from the Igbo country east of the Niger and gradually absorbed the latter. Indeed it does seem that although the incoming Edo may have been stronger and better led, those they conquered were numerically stronger and were able to impose their tongue on the conquerors. This mixed population was reflected in Aboh's governmental arrangements.

While we have direct evidence for the origin of the *Olu*-ship of the Itsekiri, we do not have similar evidence for the *Obi*-ship of Aboh. First the word *Obi* is apparently Igbo. This may well mean that the Edo conquerors did not immediately establish an Edo-type political system and that the *Obi*-ship developed later, by which time Igbo was already the language of the Aboh. However that may be, Aboh was divided into two. The *Umu*de section represented the descendants of the Edo; the *Ndishe*, descendants of non-Edo. The *Obi* and a council made up of titled men chosen from the two sections ruled the town. The two most important titles were those of *Odua* and those of *Iyasere* (some render it *Iyasele*). The *Odua* was the oldest man from the *Umu*de section. The *Odua* acted for the *Obi* when the latter was unable to carry out

20. For a fuller treatment, see, Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, pp. 33-38; Ikime "The Changing Status of Chiefs Among the Itsekiri" in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (eds.), *West African Chiefs*, Ife, pp. 289-94; Omoneukarin, op. cit.

his duties through illness or other cause. He was also the chief priest of 'Nze, the royal cult'. It is also the *Odua* who announces a new *Obi*. It is said that the *Obi*-ship was not hereditary. When an *Obi* died any one from the *Umude* section could aspire to the throne. It does not appear as if there was a group of king-makers. Prospective candidates apparently made themselves known to the *Odua*. He then engaged in a long process of consultation with the *Umude* elders until some concensus was reached, whereupon he announced a new *Obi* and the traditional ceremonies began. It is clear from his functions, that the *Odua* was a key man in Aboh.

The *Iyasere* was the chief counsellor and commander-in-chief. He had to be of mixed parentage, that is, one of his parents had to be *Umude* and the other *Ndiche*. The *Iyasere* was the priest of the cult of the *Ndiche* section of Aboh. Both the *odua* and the *Iyasere* had to offer the usual prayers and sacrifices of kola, etc. to the ancestors before the proceedings of the council of state could start.

The titled men sat on both sides of the *Obi*, the *Umude* to the left and the *Ndiche* on the right. Some of the *Umude* titles were *Adanoka*, *Ndanike*, *Oze*, *Aprusa*; some of the *Ndiche* were *Isagba*, *Ibogha*, *Onise*. These titles were given by the *Obi* not just in recognition of age but also wealth, influence, popularity and services rendered to the society.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note how everything was done to promote internal harmony by balancing the two groups which made up the kingdom. The *Obi* and his council carried out legislative, executive and judicial functions for Aboh and immediate environs. In the outlying areas the elders in council looked after local matters. But the *Obi* could send his titled men to make his wishes known to the outlying areas. It is difficult to say how effective the *Obi*'s rule was outside Aboh itself, but it would appear that because of the military and naval might of the *Obi*, he was feared if not respected by the *Ukwuani* who now claim that at no point in time did the *Obi* hold sway over them.

### Trade, The Rise of Kingdoms and Inter-Group Relations

It would be recalled from the traditions of origin that the Delta Province is inhabited by a large collection of independent units. Even within each linguistic group—for the Ijo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Ukwuani and Urhobo are essentially linguistic groups—each clan was autonomous. However, once settled in their different areas, it is fair to postulate commercial, social and other contacts between neighbouring groups. The relations between these various groups in the pre-19th century period have not all been adequately investigated. This fact places a certain limitation on the deductions that one can make. One thing, however, is clear. The bulk of the peoples of the area did not develop into monarchies. Only two did—the Itsekiri and Aboh.

It is commonly assumed that the Itsekiri and Aboh developed centralized monarchical institutions in response to the overseas trade, notably the trade in slaves. While there can be no doubt that the overseas trade led to major developments in both areas in so far as it increased the volume and pace of trade and thereby called for more efficient trade methods resulting in a demand for equally more efficient political

21. Ogedengbe, op. cit., chapters 3 & 4, gives a fuller treatment. See also Okolugbo op. cit., Chapter 1.

controls, there can be little doubt that Dr E.J. Alagoa's thesis is largely valid and indeed more satisfactory in explaining the development of these two areas.<sup>22</sup>

Alagoa states: "In the Niger Delta the centres of the overseas trade were also the centres at which state institutions were to be found, and the available evidence indicates that this trade arose at pre-existing centres of political authority".<sup>23</sup> He proves the point by reminding us that when the Portuguese arrived in the western delta they focused attention on Ughoton (Gwato), the port of Benin, and some point "up a left branch of the Forcados River" which from internal evidence he identifies with Ode-Itsekiri (or Ourre, Iwere as it is variously rendered by the Europeans).<sup>24</sup> In other words the Portuguese and other Europeans did not go to just any place; they went to places where trade was already developed, where there was some political authority that could regulate that trade. Benin and the Itsekiri kingdom represented such authority; so did Aboh. If, therefore, the development of political institutions attended long-distance trade, argues Alagoa, that long-distance trade must have developed before the European era.

This leads us to a consideration of the trade of these parts. As was stated earlier, the fact that the delta swamps did not allow for agricultural production did lead the delta dwellers to engage in trade with their hinterland neighbours. The products of the delta—fish, crayfish, salt and earthenware were exchanged for the agricultural products of the hinterland peoples. But—and this is the point which Alagoa has made so very well—there was also a great deal of trade across the delta. Captain Adams noted this fact towards the end of the 18th century when he wrote, "Much trade is carried on here (Warri) with the natives of Bonny and New Calabar, who come in their canoes for that purpose".<sup>25</sup> Alagoa's argument is that this trade was of much earlier origin.

What were the items involved in the trade? Only some are now remembered. Canoes, the means of carrying the trade itself, involved a trade across the length and breadth of the Niger delta. Most people in the delta knew something about the making of canoes. But not all the delta had the right types of timber for canoe building: canoes are not made from the red mangrove tree, for example. There developed therefore some specialization and the great canoe suppliers were the Apoi Ijo of the central delta who, Alagoa points out, had migrated to "the timber rich regions of the upper Benin River" by the 17th century.<sup>26</sup> This meant that most of the other delta peoples had to do trade in canoes with these Apoi Ijo wherever they settled to ply their craft. The Itsekiri definitely did this. So did the Aboh, though there is one solitary reference in the 19th century to canoe building in the Aboh region.

Salt was a major item of trade between the delta coastal region and the hinterland. This was why the European began to import large quantities of foreign salt till the latter drove local salt very much out of the market, though local salt was and is still

22. For this, see E.J. Alagoa, "Long Distance Trade and States in the Niger Delta", *Journal of African History* Vol. XI, No. 3, 1970, pp. 319-29.

23. Alagoa, "Long Distance Trade . . ." loc. cit., p. 319.

24. Ibid.

25. Capt. John Adams, *Sketches Taken During Ten Voyages to Africa between the years 1786 and 1800*, London, 1823, p. 35.

26. Alagoa, "Long Distance Trade . . ." loc. cit., pp. 324-25.

preferred for certain delicacies of the people. Salt was made in two ways. There was the simple evaporation of sea water, and there was the method by which salt was made from the roots, shoots and leaves of the mangrove tree. These were burnt and the ash solution filtered and evaporated. The Itsekiri like many other delta people made salt. But, as in the case of canoes, there were those renowned for salt making. In the western delta it was the Gbaramatu Ijo, in the central delta it was the Bassan and in the eastern delta the Nembe. Other delta peoples bought salt from these known centres and merely supplemented supplies so bought with their own locally made salt?<sup>27</sup>

In the 19th century European writers spoke of brass basins used in the evaporation process of salt making. Alagoa's researches have shown that the people themselves do not recollect using these brass basins. Rather they say that they used specially made clay pots, the type still in use today. This pot making was the speciality of the Itsekiri who supplied the rest of the delta. As with the other items, others made pots too, but not nearly enough for their needs.<sup>28</sup> The Portuguese who visited the Itsekiri country early in the 16th century noted the availability of suitable clay for the pottery industry.<sup>29</sup> The Itsekiri did not only make pots for the salt industry, they also made pots for household use as well as special pots for grinding tobacco. By the accounts of an 18th century visitor, the pot making industry must have been quite considerable. Wrote Adams, "the inhabitants manufacture jars for holding water, and utensils of various forms, for domestic purposes. There are baked in ovens constructed of wood, placed in the open air, and the oven is consumed while the pots are baking. From the great quantity we saw manufactured, earthenware must constitute here a considerable article of trade".<sup>30</sup>

We cannot exactly date the beginnings of both the industry and the trade, but it seems quite clear that it was pre-16th century since a 1522 Portuguese visitor wrote about the existence of the industry in the Itsekiri area. So then if one is looking for the kind of economic backbone on which the Itsekiri kingdom rested, one finds it in this long distance cross-delta trade. To this is to be added the purely local trade between the Itsekiri and their Ijo and Urhobo neighbours. In this connection one must remember that the Itsekiri must also have served as middlemen even in the local trade. Most of the Ijo groups could not reach the Urhobo directly, especially in the Forcados River area, and the Itsekiri must have served as the link between them and these agricultural people.

The advent of the overseas slave trade would have augmented Itsekiri trade by providing them with more articles for exchange with both their Ijo and Urhobo neighbours. We do not have much information on the slave trade in these parts. In 1522 a Portuguese trading vessel took on board 128 slaves in the Forcados River area.<sup>31</sup> Even in the 18th century, the heyday of the slave trade, the Itsekiri area does not seem to have yielded a vast number of slaves. Barbot claims in his writing that

27. Ibid., pp. 325-26.

28. Ibid., pp. 326-27.

29. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 49.

30. Adams, op. cit., p. 35.

31. A.F.C. Ryder. "An early Portuguese Voyage to the Forcados River in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1959, p. 307-15.



although the slaves of this area were physically excellent, "this place will not afford at most five hundred slaves in a whole year".<sup>32</sup> Captain Landolphe who enjoyed a monopoly of trade in this area for a while in the sixth and seventh decades of the 18th century was only able to obtain two cargoes of slaves for the whole period, and each was less than four hundred.<sup>33</sup> Such evidence as there is would, in fact, tend to suggest that slaves probably did not constitute the main stay of the Itsekiri economy. What seems clear is that the pre-European trade across the delta continued alongside the trade with the Europeans. And it is more than likely that as European vessels did not visit this area as often as they did the eastern delta, Itsekiri slaves were taken across the delta for sale. This is an aspect of west-east trade which has not been so far investigated in any detail. One should add that even in the days of the slave trade the Itsekiri also sold a little oil, some ivory, pepper and some kind of cloth.<sup>34</sup> All told, the picture of the Itsekiri economy which emerges is a fairly complex one and it seems reasonable to accept that it was this comparative complexity of the economy which demanded a political organization which produced the kingdom. The small size of the area may also have aided political cohesion.

The foregoing is not to minimize the impact of European commercial and other contacts on the Itsekiri kingdom and on the history of Itsekiri relations with their neighbours, particularly the Urhobo. Professor Ryder has given an account of Portuguese missionary activity in the Itsekiri kingdom from the 16th to the 19th century.<sup>35</sup> It has been suggested that the Portuguese concentrated their missionary effort on the Itsekiri when they failed to get a foothold in Benin and that the Portuguese effort contributed to the Itsekiri adopting a more independent attitude towards Benin.<sup>36</sup> If the Portuguese thought that it was possible to build up the Itsekiri kingdom as a counterpoise to Benin, one may argue that that kingdom was already fairly well developed before the arrival of the Portuguese.

As for the missionary effort itself, it was not particularly successful. From Ryder's account it is clear that the effort was concentrated on the Itsekiri capital of Ode-Itsekiri, and not much proselytizing was done in the outlying Itsekiri settlements. Priests were not always available and there were prolonged periods when there was no priest to teach the Itsekiri the new faith. Within the palace itself, the fate of Christianity was dependent on the attitude of the *Olu*. Quite a few of these did no more than pay lip-service to the new faith, their main concern being what they could get in commercial terms from the Portuguese. Hence, although the effort went on fitfully from the 16th to the 19th century, it did not leave a permanent Christian imprint on the Itsekiri.

A chronic problem of the Portuguese mission in Ode-Itsekiri was lack of funds. It does not appear as if Portugal provided any special funds for the effort. Like other missionary ventures of the time in Africa the missionaries were dependent on trade for

32. Jean Barbot, *A Description of the Coast of North and South Guinea*, London, 1732.

33. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 50.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

35. A.F.C. Ryder, "Missionary Activity in the kingdom of Warri to the early Nineteenth Century" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Dec., 1960, pp. 1-26.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Ryder, p. 3.



their means of livelihood; the contradiction of Christian priests depending on the slave trade for sustenance did not then bother the Holy Father in Rome. The link between commerce and missionary work, however, enables us to know something about Itsekiri-European trade during these centuries from the reports of the missionaries. In 1597 the Itsekiri kingdom was described by the Bishop of Sao Thome as "very poor". In the 17th century, the Dutch who were fast displacing the Portuguese as the leading European traders in West Africa, found "Warri relatively inaccessible and the trade unprofitable" and so left it "the one port on the coast that remained open to the surviving trickle of Portuguese trade". Between 1620 and about 1650 Portuguese trade with "Warri" had "dwindled to vanishing point". In 1673 the *Olu* in a letter to the king of Portugal remarked on the rarity of call of Portuguese trading vessels.<sup>39</sup>

This gloomy picture of the economy of the Itsekiri kingdom may have been exaggerated by the missionaries in an attempt to secure more sympathy from headquarters. It is in this connection important to remember that these comments refer to Itsekiri trade with Europeans. It seems fairly certain that the local trade with neighbours and across the delta which was responsible for the rise of the kingdom in the first place continued apace during these years. In 1705 it was reported that the two Capuchin priests in the kingdom had virtually abandoned their ministrations and were engaged in trade in "earthenware cooking pots, which were manufactured in Warri in large quantities; with the help of their two slaves they carried them into surrounding areas where they could be sold at a good profit".<sup>39</sup> If these strangers could make a good profit, so could the Itsekiri.

One final comment on the Portuguese missionary effort. It gave the Itsekiri an opportunity of getting rather familiar with the kings of Portugal and Spain. Letters passed between various Itsekiri rulers and these two European rulers. In 1610 an Itsekiri prince was sent to Portugal for training in sacerdotal duties. He returned with a Portuguese wife.<sup>40</sup> Later on, in the 18th century, when a French company run by one Captain Landolphe was established in the kingdom, another Itsekiri prince was sent to France where he was received at the French court and granted a royal pension of 1500 francs a month during his brief stay in that country in 1786.<sup>41</sup> These contacts resulted in the Itsekiri regarding themselves as superior to the neighbouring peoples at the same time as both the contacts and their position as middlemen ensured that they got more arms and ammunition—and so were stronger—than those same surrounding peoples. As Dr Lloyd has put it, "The Itsekiri are intensely proud of their contact with the Portuguese. From it stems their claims to superiority over the neighbouring Urhobo people".<sup>42</sup> These 'claims to superiority' have had an important consequence for the later history of this part of Nigeria.<sup>43</sup>

It was stated earlier that we do not have any detailed knowledge of the slave trade in these parts. However, it has always been assumed that the slaves sold by the Itsekiri to

38. Ryder, pp. 6-13.

39. Ryder, p. 18.

40. Ryder, pp. 5-6.

41. P. C. Lloyd, "Captain Landolphe and the Compagnie d'Owhere et de Benin", in *ODU*, (Old Series), No. 5, 1957, pp. 14-15.

42. P. C. Lloyd, "The Portuguese in Warri", *ODU* (Old Series) No. 4, 1956, p. 28.

43. For the effect on Itsekiri-Urhobo relations, see *Niger Delta Rivalry*.

the Europeans were Urhobo slaves from 'up country' since apart from their relatively small population, the Itsekiri were not allowed to enslave fellow Itsekiri. While one cannot doubt that Urhobo slaves could really be disposed of mainly through the Itsekiri, one should point out that it was easy for Yoruba slaves to find their way through the creeks to this area, and also that the Itsekiri could quite easily have taken some part at least indirectly in the Benin trade in slaves about which one hears so much. Having said that, one must still have a look at such information as can be gleaned from oral tradition about the Urhobo slave trade and its organization.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps the first thing that can be said in this connection is that the traditions do not refer to any slave 'fairs' or markets of the type one hears of for the eastern delta and the Yoruba kingdoms. There are virtually no traditions of Itsekiri-Urhobo wars which can be dated to the pre-19th century period, and the general impression is that organized slave raids into the Urhobo area was not a regular feature of Itsekiri-Urhobo relations during this period. It would seem, therefore, that Urhobo slaves found their way to the Itsekiri country more through peaceful methods than through organized raids. So far as one can discover the sources of slaves from the Urhobo country were the following. Firstly, criminals of various types were sold into slavery. Secondly, during inter-clan wars, captives were sold into slavery. The traditions of the Urhobo and Isoko clans are replete with stories of wars between clans.<sup>45</sup> These wars have not been fully investigated and so we cannot at all be sure about when they were fought. It seems, however, reasonable to suggest that wars may well have been fought during a period when the various clans, having lived for a while in and around the area of the parent settlement, began to push outwards in response to population and other pressures. Such a push would have been common to many of the clans and so produced conflict which led to war. In fact there is hardly any case of an Urhobo or Isoko clan not having gone to war with one or other of its neighbours. The present writer has suggested elsewhere that these wars were responsible for the development of some common identities and interests as neighbouring clans sought to find an answer to common problems and a formula for peaceful co-existence.<sup>46</sup> It is commonly admitted that slaves got from such wars were quickly sold as otherwise a mutual restitution of captives might be decided upon. So this was the second source through which slaves were obtained. It is, however, quite impossible to attempt an estimation of the numbers involved in such transactions.

That there were no great slave markets in the Urhobo and Isoko countries does not mean that folks did not obtain and sell slaves. What it does seem to indicate is that when an Urhobo or Isoko obtained a slave or slaves by force or guile he arranged to dispose of them quickly. He did not hoard them, hoping to do one great sale. It is true that the lot of the slave in Urhobo or Isoko was not very hard. But there was good reason for disposing quickly of slaves. The Urhobo and Isoko could not organize raids against their neighbours—the Ijo, renowned pirates dreaded, even by the well-armed Itsekiri; the Bini who were infinitely better organized and had the reputation of their *Oba* to frighten the neighbourhood; the Aboh, powerfully armed and in contact with

44. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, Chapter 2.

45. For some discussion of these wars, see Ikime, *The Isoko People*.

46. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, pp. 12-13.

the eastern delta; the Itsekiri who controlled the flow of firearms into the hinterland. Therefore the Urhobo had to look among themselves for their supply of slaves. This was possible because there was at that time little consciousness of belonging to a common stock, the clan being the largest unit within which consanguinity played an important part in social relations.

Given the above situations, it was permitted for an Urhobo man from one clan to enslave an Urhobo from another clan. As the Urhobo clans were not too widely dispersed, enslaving a fellow Urhobo carried with it the possibility of reprisal if the slave was not sold quickly so that his relations could not trace his enslaver. This was why there was not great hoarding. Over the years there probably arose men with a reputation for speedily disposing of slaves. However the Itsekiri obtained their slaves, the slaves trade constituted part of Itsekiri-Urhobo commerce. That trade also contributed to the claim which the Itsekiri were wont to make right up to the fifties of the present century that the Urhobo were their slaves—a claim which led to hostile relations between the two peoples.

We must now look at the Aboh situation. At this point we must recall Alagoa's argument already referred to as to the connection between long-distance trade and the rise of the delta states. Dr K. O. Dike has suggested that those who founded Aboh were, like others who migrated during this period, lured by the profitable trade of the delta. But as the Atlantic coast had already been occupied these new comers moved up the Niger valley.<sup>47</sup> The traditions indicate that Aboh engaged in warfare with surrounding peoples and was usually victorious. The evidence thus seems to point to one conclusion—that the Aboh group were militarily strong and determined to participate in the delta trade.

The location which the Aboh ultimately chose was conducive to active participation in this trade. True Aboh is removed from the Atlantic coast; but it is infinitely well placed to act as a distributive centre between the Ukwuani and Igala peoples and the coastal delta dwellers. Furthermore, "it occupied a strong strategic position 147 miles from Forcados—the most important mouth of the Niger—and was about the same distance from Bonny, Brass, New Calabar and Akassa on the sea".<sup>48</sup> This was unquestionably the role it played in the 19th century and though we have no direct evidence for saying so it is reasonable to assume that it played a similar role at an earlier period. Alagoa has suggested that Nembe was a major customer of the Aboh from where she obtained yams and livestock to augment the fish and plantain diet which could be obtained from neighbouring delta peoples.<sup>49</sup> Aboh would also have indulged in the canoe trade discussed earlier on. As the slave trade developed, Aboh was extremely well placed to tap the slave resources of the Ukwuani and Igala areas and to sell these to the Nembe and other delta peoples for onward transmission across the Atlantic. It seems, therefore, that the kingdom arose largely as a result of her involvement in this commercial north-south and cross-delta trade. Success in trade, including the trade in arms and ammunition, meant increase in military and naval

47. K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 25-26.

48. Okolugbo, *op. cit.*

49. Alagoa, "Long Distance Trade . . .", *loc. cit.*, p. 322.

power which enabled Aboh to develop into one of the most powerful kingdoms of the Niger valley.<sup>50</sup>

It is logical to ask why the Ijo of this province did not develop city-states like their eastern counterparts. The comments which have already been made with regard to the Itsekiri kingdom should provide some clue. Of the various Ijo groups only the Gbaramatu Ibe, known for salt making, seemed to possess an economic basis on which to build a political edifice. But then her geographical location militated against her as she was hemmed in by Itsekiri settlements which seemed to have succeeded in overshadowing her. She could not benefit much either from the impetus created by the European trade which was centred on the Forcados River and then the Benin River, thus side-tracking the Escravos, the home of the Gbaramatu. Further more, the Ijo did not, like the Itsekiri or the Aboh or indeed some of the eastern Ijo, possess any hinterland to which she was connected by waterways uninterrupted by 'strangers'. Geographical factors thus militated against the Ijo developing into powerful city-states. Their reaction was to make the best of the situation by preying on the trade of their more fortunate neighbours, building up for themselves thereby a reputation as dreaded pirates.<sup>51</sup>

### Conclusion

As a history of the peoples of the western delta area of Nigeria before 1800, what has been attempted here is really no more than a survey. The available evidence cannot yet support any detailed history and a great deal more work requires to be done. It is, however, important to draw attention once again to a few aspects of this survey. Firstly, it is clear that the units of operation among the various peoples were very small. For most of them the clan was the highest level of political organization. Even for the two kingdoms of Itsekiri and Aboh the components parts were not too well knit together. Secondly, there was a great deal of interaction largely as a result of trade. The Itsekiri were in touch with the Yoruba, the Bini, the Ijo, the Urhobo; the Ukwuani were very much in touch with the Isoko and some of the Ijo; Aboh was linked with Igala and the eastern delta as well as the Isoko. Indeed a map of modern Nigeria showing the various routes of trade in this period is likely to reveal that even in the pre-19th century period the peoples who now make up Nigeria were not as removed one from the other as is sometimes thought and even publicly asserted. Finally the development of the various peoples was unequal. Those who occupied the right places along the coastal belt developed centralized monarchical institutions and engaged in far ranging trade while the forest dwellers tended to remain within their smaller units and to engage in much more limited trading activities. One reason for this is that the canoe provided a means of movement and conveyance much more effective and efficient than the foot of the forest peoples. These same coastal dwellers were better placed to take greater advantage of European trade and other contacts than their hinterland neighbours. This unequal development continued, as will be shown in a later chapter, through the 19th century, and was to be a major factor in the history of the colonial period of Nigeria's history.

50. For a fuller treatment, see Ogedengbe, chapters 4 & 5.

51. See Ikime, "The Western Ijo . . .", loc. cit., pp. 71-72



## THE BENIN KINGDOM

A. F. C. RYDER

## The Problems of Origins and Antiquity

The kingdom of Benin ceased to exist as an independent state in 1897 when it was annexed to the Niger Coast Protectorate. Its beginnings are far less easily determined, the only direct evidence for them being that furnished by oral tradition which presents great difficulties of interpretation when it deals with such remote events. Much ink had been squandered on the vexed question of the origins of peoples and their rulers, often enough without even making a clear distinction between the two. On linguistic and cultural evidence the people of Benin City and the heartlands of the kingdom belong to the Edo group which had probably occupied that region for upwards of three thousand years; the kingdom has almost certainly been in existence for less than a millennium. The traditions preserved by the monarchy itself trace dynasty overthrown in 1897 with a fair degree of conviction to an origin around the 13th century. Some thirty rulers are reckoned to have reigned in that span of time.<sup>1</sup> Beyond that we encounter much vaguer accounts of an earlier monarchy extending back over another thirty reigns to the supposed first settlement of the Edo in that area. Some of the features of the later dynasty—items of regalia, an extensive palace, an order of hereditary kingmakers—are traced back to the earlier, but it is possible that the whole concept of the first *Ogiso* ('kings of the sky') dynasty is a mirror-image of the historical kingdom evoked to explain a period for which no other frame of reference is remembered.<sup>2</sup>

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Edo living in the Benin area in pre-dynastic times were organized socially and politically in a manner that has remained typical of that people elsewhere, that is to say in the lineage group which could by aggregation form villages or small towns, but not cities of the Yoruba type. A reliable water supply and relatively fertile soil could explain the emergence of such a settlement in the area of Benin City. This assumption receives some support from a recent survey

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1. Ref. R.E. Bradbury, "Chronological problems in the study of Benin history", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Dec. 1959. The length of the king-list varies a little with different informants.
  2. Excavations on the site of the supposed Ogiso palace have uncovered no trace of either building of occupation. Admittedly the site is a large one and only a small part of it has been investigated, but the results have so far been entirely negative.



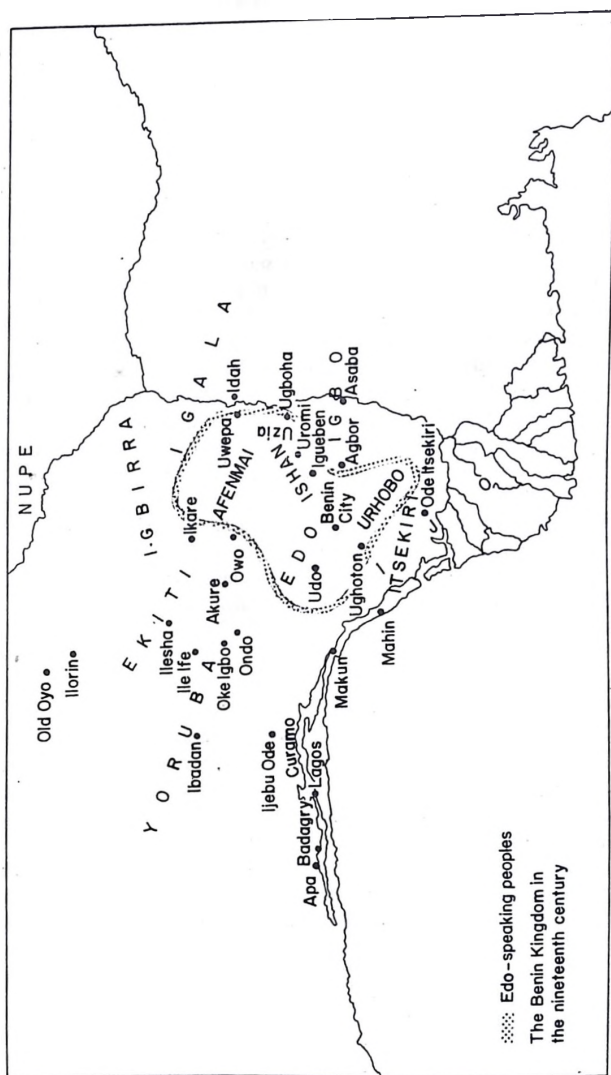
of the complex series of earthworks which constitute so notable a feature of Benin topography and which may be found on a smaller scale elsewhere in the kingdom. Apart from the largest, and reputedly latest rampart attributed to Oba Ewuare, they appear as a honeycomb of linear earthworks delimiting territory: a series of large, juxtaposed enclosures adequate for the dwelling houses and immediate farmland of family groups.<sup>3</sup> There are thus grounds for supposing that Benin City may have been, in origin, a cluster of small groups living in proximity one to another in a forest clearing. As for political institutions, we might expect a settlement of this kind to have relied primarily upon the common Edo principles of age and primogeniture as the criteria for apportioning authority, and perhaps to have evolved a system of hereditary chieftaincy. Tradition certainly insists that the hereditary order of *Uzama* chiefs existed in Benin before the present line of kings was established and that theirs are the oldest of all the Benin chieftaincy titles.<sup>4</sup> It is also possible that there evolved from within this Edo community a paramount chieftaincy, of either an hereditary or elective character, which would have given Benin an early experience of kingship; but this is pure speculation which is never likely to be susceptible of proof.

In seeking the origins of the kingship, and hence the kingdom, we seem to tread on firmer ground when we come to the traditions which recount in some detail how a number of Benin chiefs, rather than accept one of their own number as an hereditary ruler, sought a sovereign from the Yoruba dynasty ruling in Ife. There is nothing inherently implausible in the story. If the Edo community had become deeply divided—as the traditions imply—one party might well have turned for protection to the magical powers of a distant potentate, while the other upheld the indigenous system against this intrusion. One must, however, consider the possibility that the story, or some elements of it, represent a piece of 'culture capture' designed to relate the Benin dynasty to the prestigious royal line of the Yoruba which traced its origin to the creation of the world. At the end of the 15th century the first Portuguese visitors to Benin were told that the *Oba* received investiture and regalia from a distant potentate whom the Edo knew as *Ogane*; this 'suzerain' may have been the Oni of Ife. Before 1897 parts of the body of a dead *Oba* were sent to Ife for burial. But although there are good grounds for accepting some ritual and dynastic relationship between Benin and Ife, exactly how it was established is hard to determine. In 1823 an English trader learnt only that the founder of the kingdom "came from the great water".<sup>5</sup> The

3. Ref. G. Connah, "New light on the Benin City walls", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1967. The map published by Connah shows the notion that Benin City is surrounded by three walls to be erroneous. In attributing the earthworks outside Ewuare's wall to the earlier *Oba Oguola* and in describing them as defensive structures, tradition seems to be explaining the unknown by reference to the known. Confusion as to their exact nature could easily arise because dense vegetation screens them from anything but an exact survey with chain and compass.

4. These titles are *Oliha*, *Edohen*, *Ezomo*, *Ero*, *Eholo Nire* and *Oloton*, *Oba Ewuare* added a seventh, that of the their apparent, the *Edaiken*. (cf., *infra* p. 00) Until 1897 each of these chiefs ruled over his own village outside the city wall.

5. *Royal Gold Coast Gazette*, Vol. I, No. 21, 25 March 1823, pp. 73-74. Cf., A.F.C. Ryder, "A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship", *Journal of African History*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 1965.



Yoruba historian Samuel Johnson, writing in 1897, made the first king of Benin a grandson of Oduduwa and a brother of Oranmiyan and other founders of the senior Yoruba kingdoms.<sup>6</sup> In 1898 a group of senior Benin chiefs gave Captain Roupell a kinglist and a summary of Benin history according to which, "The people of this country sent to Ife in the Yoruba country for a King. Eweka was sent to them".<sup>7</sup> Without citing any sources, written or oral, P.A. Talbot greatly elaborated the story, associating both the *Ogiso* and the later Benin dynasty with Ife. According to his version the *Oni* sent a prince named Erhe to rule in Benin but his son Ogiso abandoned the task and returned to Ife. Subsequently Oranmiyan was sent and he became the father of Eweka before he too left Benin for his homeland.<sup>8</sup> The Oranmiyan story was established definitively in Benin historiography when Chief Egharevba incorporated it in his *A Short History of Benin* which was first published in 1934. A kinglist given to Bradbury in the 1950s by Esekhurhe, the priest of the royal ancestors, agrees with the 1898 list in making Eweka, not Oranmiyan, the first Oba; Bradbury comments that "Oranmiyan is not usually considered to have been an *Oba* in Benin and the founding of the dynasty is normally attributed to his son Eweka".<sup>9</sup> The most that one can safely conclude from this evidence is that Eweka was probably the first *Oba* to rule in Benin, and that he was probably of Yoruba origin, though not necessarily first-hand from Ife. Estimates of the date when his reign began have varied within the reasonably narrow compass of 1200 and 1300.<sup>10</sup> Partial excavation of the site of the palace at Usama where the first *Obas* are believed to have lived has revealed remains of an early building beneath deposits which suggest a long period of abandonment as an occupation site. This sequence agrees well enough with the tradition that the early palace was occupied for only three reigns. A single radiocarbon date from it is insufficient to fix the settlement with any precision, but it does indicate a period consonant with the genealogical and oral evidence.<sup>11</sup>

### ✶ The Development of the Kingdom

What innovations the dynasty may have brought from its place of origin we cannot determine because next to nothing is known about the Yoruba peoples themselves at this early date. The essential innovation was presumably the monarchy itself: all the features that made the Benin kingship distinctive, and very different from the corresponding institutions in Yorubaland, seem to have emerged in later years when the dynasty must have become absorbed in its Edo environment. Eweka is said to have governed through the pre-dynastic *Uzama* chiefs whose hereditary titles he confirmed and whose influence as heads of the indigenous clans for long overshadowed that of the

6. *History of the Yoruba*, pp. 7-8.

7. H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin*, reprint London, 1968, p. 7.

8. P.A. Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, London, 1926, Vol. I, p. 153.

9. Bradbury, *op. cit.* p. 267.

10. Egharevba puts it about 1200, Talbot and Bradbury around 1300.

11. The archaeologist Graham Connah has written a full account of his excavations in Benin City and it is hoped that this work will soon be published. A preliminary report, "Archaeological research in Benin City, 1961-64", appeared in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1963.

rulers. Tradition has it that Ewedo, the fourth *Oba*, tried with some success to put an end to this subordination. After a battle with them he was able to deprive the *Uzama* of their quasi-regalian rights and remove himself from their midst to a more spacious palace on the site of the present building. Thereafter he was able to organize a sizeable following of his own around his court and create a number of non-hereditary titles for his leading men.<sup>12</sup> In so doing he may have been following Yoruba practice, but it is equally possible that he based his royal household on those of the *Uzama* chiefs. In later centuries the *Uzama* certainly had their own miniature courts whose structure and title systems resembled the greater apparatus of the *Oba*; though it is often assumed that these must have developed in imitation of the royal court, it is perhaps more likely that the process was the other way round.<sup>13</sup> Ewedo had, in other words, won for himself and his successors a position of *primus inter pares*. For the next two centuries no further significant change is known to have affected this balance of power within the state.

For more than a century the territory ruled by the *Obas* of Benin remained very small, encompassing no more than the capital, and the dependent villages settled from it over a radius of perhaps fifteen miles. The only foreign war remembered prior to the 15th century was the struggle against the neighbouring town of Udo, some thirty miles to the west of Benin. This conflict is associated with the reign of Oguola, the son of Ewedo; though it ended in a Benin victory, it did not mark the end of Udo as a serious rival and Benin territory was not much extended as a result of it.

Tradition says that this rather static state of affairs was rudely shattered in the 15th century by an upheaval which transformed the township into a city, the limited monarch into an autocrat, and the insignificant territory into a kingdom. These remarkable changes are attributed to a man of violence and genius named Ogun who took the royal name of Ewuare after destroying much of the old settlement by fire and killing the reigning *Oba*. According to the traditions of the royal house, Ewuare was ousting a junior brother who had usurped the throne, but the dynastic genealogy upon which this story relies loses credibility at this point, and one suspects that its main aim is to preserve the necessary line of legitimacy in the succession through a major upheaval. The degree of violence and destruction that accompanied Ewuare's seizure of power suggests a widespread struggle in which Benin came out on the losing side, but whether this arose from civil war or external attack we have as yet no means of knowing.

Ewuare redesigned and rebuilt his devastated capital in such a manner as to make himself secure and visible master of it. To that end a huge ditch and rampart, similar in conception to the earlier enclosures but vastly more imposing, was thrown up in the centre of Benin obliterating many of the older landmarks. Within the rampart a broad avenue separated the palace (*ogbe*) from a town (*ore*) in which were housed a large number of guilds that exercised their crafts and offices in the service of the palace. Among them were physicians, diviners, smiths, carvers, carpenters, bards,

12. The titles of *Iyase*, *Uwangue* and *Osodin* are among those attributed to Ewedo.

13. Cf., Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, p. 11. "He (i.e. Ewedo) also made a law that *Oliha* should only crown the *Oba* of Benin and that he and the other *Uzama Nihinron* should not confer titles any more.

drummers, executioners and cloth makers. Internally each of these guilds had an organization based upon age-grades exactly like that of an Edo village. Their skills and functions were probably not new to Benin, but under Ewuare they became more highly organized and integrated with the palace by each being affiliated to one of the departments or associations into which Ewuare divided his palace retainers.

As a result of this reorganization the palace came to be administered by three associations of retainers named *Iwebo*, *Iweguae* and *Ibiwe*, corresponding to the three principal departments of the wardrobe, the household and the harem. Each association had three grades of membership, analogous to the village age-grades, the senior of which enjoyed individual titles conferred for life by the *Oba*. In theory these titles were open to the talents and could be aspired to by anyone who had proved his ability and loyalty in the lower grades. However, in the course of time a high proportion were filled from families of the capital with a tradition of service in the palace. A period of palace service in the lowest grade may have been obligatory for all freeborn male subjects of the *Oba* in the 15th and 16th centuries. Later on a considerable proportion of those who served in the lower ranks would still return in due course to their villages, thus helping to establish those links between the court and people which were an important element in the political equilibrium of Benin. Thus the whole of the free adult male population became integrated with the palace organization through which they were brought into some degree of personal relationship with the *Oba*. All became "the *Oba's* slaves" (*evien-Oba*) marked with the facial body scarifications (also attributed to Ewuare) which distinguished them from true slaves.

For the town component of the city Ewuare created another association of chiefs, the *Eghaeuvo n'Ore*, similar in respect of its grades and titles to the palace associations. All titled chiefs of both palace and town participated in the *Oba's* council whose function it was to advise the ruler on any matter he cared to lay before it, and especially in giving judgements and deliberating on questions of war and peace. These same chiefs, together with the members of the junior grades of the associations, were the agents through whom the *Oba* governed his other subjects. Junior grades furnished messengers, soldiers and other executants of the royal will; the titled chiefs were allocated villages for which they answered to the *Oba*, particularly in matters of tribute, and whose interests they in turn represented at court.

Such was the nature of the new city to which Ewuare is said to have given the name of *Edo*, perhaps in the hope of obliterating the memory of an older name—*Ubini*, perhaps to emphasize the physical transformation that he had effected.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the motive for the change of name, it was a step that fitted well with many others apparently designed to impress on his subjects the might of their new master. Among these, especial mention should be made of the annual *Igue* festival, introduced to celebrate the *Oba's* mystical powers, and of the stress which Ewuare laid on his claim to supernatural attributes; more than any other *Oba* he is remembered as a great magician. On a more mundane level he endeavoured to secure the throne for his heirs by applying the Edo principles of primogeniture to the succession. To the prince thus

14. The traditional attribution of the inner earthwork and rebuilding of the palace to Ewuare is supported by radiocarbon dates which place both in the 15th century.



marked out to follow him he gave the title of *Edaiken* which he added to the order of hereditary title holders, the *Uzama Nihinron*.

In many ways the *Uzama* were the chief victims of Ewuare's revolution. Their villages were reduced to mere suburbs of the royal city; in affairs of state they were overshadowed by the new orders of non-hereditary chiefs; their ability to regulate or influence the succession to the throne disappeared with the installation of an *Edaiken*. In sum, they were no longer the overmighty subjects they had been since the time of Eweka.

Ewuare's reputation as a warrior, established by his conquest of Benin, grew steadily through the years of his reign. Leading his armies in person, he waged war in all directions and far beyond the previous bounds of the state. Edo peoples as far north as the Afenmai area, the Yoruba towns of Akure and Owo, as well as many groups of the western Igbo are said to have submitted to him. Even allowing for some exaggeration, these conquests still represent a remarkable expansion of Benin. They may have been the fruit of Ewuare's reforms in Benin itself, the external manifestation of his tightened control over its human and material resources. On the other hand, if Ewuare launched his attack on Benin from some external base, as seems likely, he must already have been master of another territory before he gained control of Benin.<sup>15</sup> His career of conquest also coincided with a general disturbance of the state structure over a much wider area: the southward thrust of the Hausa states of Zaria and Kano, the rise of the Nupe and Jukun kingdoms, and possibly the development of Oyo and Idah all took place in the same century as the expansion of Benin. So it may be that a general disarray among the peoples south of the Niger aided Ewuare in his career of conquest.

The events that followed Ewuare's death suggest that the people of Benin had not taken kindly to his drastic handling of their customs and institutions; the *Uzama* in particular were not yet reconciled to the new order. One after another his children fell victims to plots. His eldest son, Ezoti, is said to have been killed by a poisoned arrow during the coronation ceremonies. Ezoti's only son and rightful heir by the law of primogeniture was murdered before he could claim the crown. The succession next passed to Ewuare's second child, a daughter, but she contracted an incurable disease after accepting the title of Edaiken. Next in line came another son of Ewuare named Olua. He did manage to ascend and hold the throne for a few years only to find his

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15. According to tradition Ewuare ordered that he should be buried at Esi near Udo, a curious instruction unless he had close ties with that place. (Cf., Eweka's request for his remains to be carried to Ife.) In view of the earlier conflict between Udo and Benin, it is not impossible that Ewuare came from the rival Edo town to reverse the defeat inflicted upon it by Oba Oguola. When Ewuare's eldest son was killed soon after his accession, the next in line to the throne. Ewuare's grandson, had to be brought from Esi with his mother. A younger son of Ewuare who eventually became Oba Ozolua of Benin made his eldest son *Edaiken* and his second chief of Udo—a further indication of the importance of Udo to the royal dynasty. The two brothers, fought a better civil war after Ozolua's death. Victory went this time to the Oba of Benin, Esigie, who treated Udo as the Romans did Carthage: the town was destroyed and the survivors settled far away. And it may have been in order to sever the tie between the ruling house and Udo that "Esigie made a law that no prince should be made ruler of Udo any more". (Egharevba, op. cit. p. 28).

own son and heir, Iginua, rejected as Edaiken by the chiefs. Iginua thereupon left Benin to found his own kingdom among the Itsekiri. When Olua died without further heirs the throne remained vacant for some years. But as Benin struggled to free itself from Ewuare's heirs and the system of government they represented, so the subject territories grasped the opportunity to throw off the yoke of Benin. Peoples who had been the victims of the warrior's exploits now turned around and "pillaged the city".<sup>16</sup> Thus the Benin chiefs, unable to control the situation, were obliged to seek a defender in Okpame, a younger son of Ewuare who had been banished from the city. Okpame, who was a crowned *Oba* with the name of Ozolua, reimposed his father's regime and then embarked on a systematic chastisement of the rebel provinces. He is remembered as Ozolua the Conqueror, his reign as a ceaseless round of wars ended only by his death at the hands of his own men.

The tension between ruler and subjects continued into the reign of Ozolua's son, Esigie, who is said to have faced an attempt to overthrow him organized by the leader of the *Uzama* chiefs, *Oliha*, in alliance with the *Attah* of Idah. The failure of that attempt and Esigie's destruction of Udo<sup>17</sup> seem to mark a turning point in the fortunes of Ewuare's line. Thereafter Esigie was able in the course of his reign to reconcile his subjects to the new regime, or at least to attach a generation of newly-created chiefs firmly to the throne, thus neutralizing the opposition of the hereditary *Uzama*.<sup>18</sup> The development of European trade, beginning with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1486 (probably in the time of Ozolua), may have helped this process of consolidation by introducing a new source of wealth which was largely controlled by the crown and court as a state monopoly. Large quantities of brass imported from Europe certainly enabled Esigie to foster the royal art of brasscasting by the *cire perdue* technique. Indeed it is only from this period that excavation has so far uncovered evidence of this technique in Benin City, though tradition maintains that it was introduced as early as the reign of *Oba* Oguola.<sup>19</sup> The extant corpus of Benin brasswork appears to begin with the late 15th or early 16th century, so if there were many earlier pieces they must have gone into the melting pot.<sup>20</sup> The magnificent output of the Benin guild of brassworkers during the 16th century is the best testimony available to the wealth, talent and prestige that the monarchy commanded from the time of Esigie. An apparent blot upon Esigie's record—he is said to have introduced human sacrifice to Benin—may represent the arrogation to the *Oba* of jurisdiction in all crimes carrying the death penalty, for those sacrificed in the *Oba*'s rituals—and no subject was permitted to make a human sacrifice—were commonly reported to be condemned criminals.

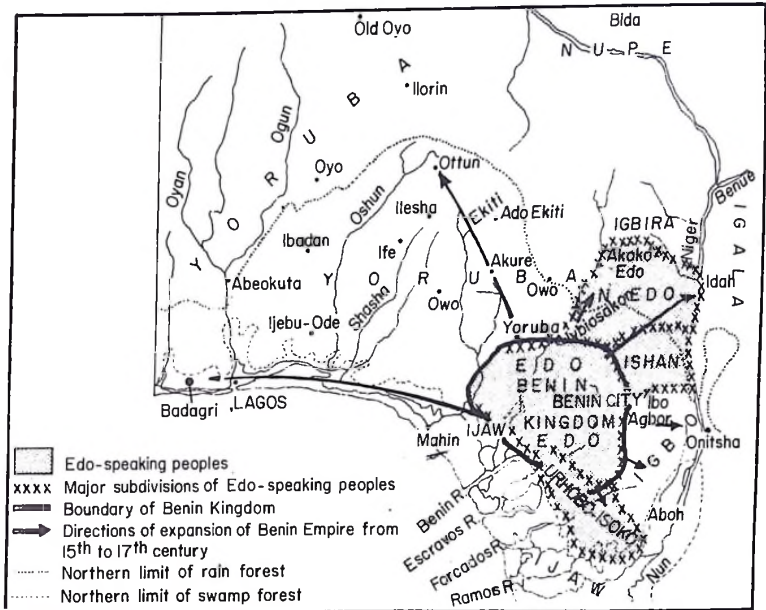
16. Egharevba, *op. cit.* p. 23.

17. Cf. *supra*, p. 12, n. 1.

18. Esigie is said to have created seventeen new titles—more than any other *Oba*. Portuguese records of the early 16th century give the impression that the *Uzama* had been eclipsed by the palace chiefs.

19. Brass artefacts and fragments have been found in earlier contexts, but they are all made by a smithing and not a casting process.

20. One of the best known pieces attributed to the early period of Benin brass-casting is the head usually identified as an *Iyoba* or queen mother. This was a title created by Esigie early in the 16th century for his mother.



THE KINGDOM OF BENIN

Throughout all but the opening years of the 16th century the history of Benin presents a picture of internal stability with crown passing undisputed by the rule of primogeniture from one powerful *Oba* to another. The dynasty maintained the military tradition of Ewuare and Ozolua, but the only significant gains of territory and influence were won towards the coast where Mahin was conquered and Benin authority extended as far as Lagos. A form of suzerainty over the new Itsekiri state helped to consolidate Benin authority along the coast which had assumed greater economic and political importance with the arrival of European traders. To the north the armies of Benin defeated a formidable attack from the direction of Oyo during the reign of Ehengbuda.<sup>21</sup> With small modifications, however, the territory of the Benin kingdom remained that carved out by Ewuare.

The character of the Benin monarchy again underwent profound change following the death of Ehengbuda who was drowned while engaged on an expedition in the coastal lagoons. This disaster, which happened about 1600, was responsible, according to Chief Egharevba, for an important change in the role of the *Oba*. "It was

21. Since Oyo was at that time under Nupe control, it is possible that Benin faced and repulsed a Nupe rather than an Oyo invasion. Battle scenes on some of the Benin plaques support this interpretation.

arranged that the Benin war chiefs or warriors be commanding the Benin troops and not the *Oba* of Benin any more".<sup>22</sup> In fact during Ehengbuda's lifetime it had already become the common practice for the armies to be led by the *Iyase*, the principal town chief. practice now hardened into custom and the line of warrior *Obas* founded by Ewuare came to an end. Conversely the secluded life to which the rulers had been adapting themselves now became more rigorously restricted and organized within the bounds of the palace. More than ever before the *Oba* became a semi-divine ruler occupied in an endless round of ritual, emerging from his palace only once or twice a year on ceremonial occasions, and never going beyond the city wall.

So profound a change in the role and character of the ruler threw the system of government into some disequilibrium. The influence of the chiefs—especially those of the palace who supervised the *Oba's* life and controlled access to him—was greatly enhanced. Indeed it may without too much exaggeration be said that the *Oba* had now become the prisoner of that organization (the palace) which had originally been created to rescue him from the *Uzama*. One striking illustration of the power usurped by the palace chiefs is their success in changing the mode of succession to the throne in such a way that they were able to make a choice of a king among the numerous members of the royal lineage without any reference to the principle of primogeniture.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly the 17th century saw a long line of powerless, undistinguished figures on the throne, several of them old men who were chosen presumably in the hope that they would reward their electors liberally, then pass on without more ado to make way for a new incumbent.

### The Economic Base of the Monarchy

Despite the sorry plight of its rulers, Benin was spared major internal upheavals and external dangers through much of the 17th century. Partly that stability may be accounted for by the prosperity that the kingdom, and in particular the capital, enjoyed during those years. Ewuare had organized his enlarged state so that tribute came regularly into Benin City from all his subjects. Twice a year the tribute units—single villages, groups of villages or chiefdoms—despatched their offerings in the form of foodstuffs from those nearer the capital and slaves or livestock from those at a distance. The town and palace chiefs responsible for the tribute units took half of what was delivered and presented the rest to the *Oba*. Revenue was also derived from tolls collected at the gates in the city wall; the large markets held in Benin continued its trade with Europeans, a trade of special importance to the *Oba* and palace chiefs because they controlled it. They also enjoyed a monopoly of many of the products, such as pepper and ivory, that figured in it. The 17th century witnessed a great expansion of the European trade as Dutch and English merchants competed fiercely for Benin's ivory and cloth. To meet that demand the *Oba's* agents and private traders

22. Egharevba, *op. cit.* p. 34.

23. A 17th century account of the mode of succession recorded in Dapper lays the choice of an heir on the *Oba*, but it is represented as being made on his death-bed and communicated in secret to the *Uwuangue*, the senior of the palace chiefs, who revealed the nomination only after the *Oba's* death.



travelled far inland, and it is probably from this period that we may date the trading associations that controlled the long-distance trade of Benin.<sup>24</sup> All accounts of European visitors to Benin City during those years describe it as a very large, well-ordered and prosperous place. Thus, despite the decline in the authority of the *Oba*, the state was borne along on a general tide of economic wellbeing.

Tension could nonetheless arise over the distribution of wealth which depended in turn upon the distribution of power between the different factions of chiefs and the *Oba*. Such a crisis seems to have arisen in the reign of Ahenkpaye. Egharevba relates it in the following manner:

"He was a tall, handsome and majestic figure, but he was a wicked and selfish *Oba*. His selfishness reached such a high pitch that it became unbearable to the nation, because he usurped the rights and privileges attached to the offices of his chiefs and his voice was the law."<sup>25</sup> In the detailed indictment of Ahenkpaye the tradition recorded by Egharevba makes it clear that his offence was to deprive members of the palace societies of numerous fees and perquisites. Eventually all three orders of chiefs *Uzama*, *Eghaevbo n'Ore* and *Eghaevbo n'Ogbe* hatched a successful conspiracy to dethrone him in favour of a more compliant and 'liberal' man.

### Conflict, Decline and Revival

This system could function as long as no serious quarrels broke the unity of the chiefs to give a determined *Oba* the chance to assert his authority. In the last decade of the 17th century, however, such a split did occur between, it would seem, the *Iyase* and the town chiefs on the one hand and the palace chiefs on the other. The cause of the dispute, as reported by a Dutch trader, was an attempt by the latter on the wealth of the former. Amid rising tension the town chiefs and their dependants left the city, camped some miles away and settled down to a lengthy civil war in which the capital again suffered sack and devastation by fire. After several years of desultory fighting and destruction a truce was made leaving the *Oba* master of a depopulated and battered city.

Although it is uncertain who was reigning when the civil war began, there is little doubt that it ended in the reign of Akenzua I.<sup>26</sup> Within a few years Akenzua had succeeded in reasserting the effective authority of the throne and in restoring Benin to much of its former prosperity, though it is doubtful whether the city ever entirely regained the splendour it had known in the 16th and 17th centuries. To counter-balance the power of the *Iyase* he brought the *Uzama* back into prominence and made one of them, the *Exomo*, commander of the Benin armies in place of the *Iyase*. To deprive the chiefs of their control over the succession to the throne, he reintroduced

24. Ref. R.E. Bradbury, *Benin Studies*, London, 1973, p. 49. In the 19th century the most important of these associations was called Ekhengo (forest traders) and controlled trade with the Yoruba country through its base at Akure.

25. Egharevba, *op. cit.* p. 36.

26. One would expect the rebels to have tried to put an *Oba* of their own choosing on the throne. An attempt to do so may lie behind the brief reign of Ozuere as recorded by Egharevba. It is certainly significant that "Ozuere's claim was supported by *Iyase Ode* and there was civil war which lasted many weeks". This is the only reference which Egharevba makes to the civil war.



the rule of primogeniture and the custom of installing an Edaiken while the ruler still lived. Moreover, under him the ranks of the chiefs ceased to be the closed oligarchy which they had become under the weak rulers of the previous century. In that period the power of creating new titles, freely used by Ewuare, Esigie and Ehengbuda, had fallen into abeyance; Akenzua now revived it to reward men loyal to him and make the title system a flexible instrument of political and social control. Although he did not abandon the ritual seclusion which had governed the life of an *Oba* for approximately a century, these other measures proved sufficient to restore a balance between royal and chiefly authority in the running of the state. They could not, however, entirely eliminate factions which henceforth tended to find expression after an *Oba's* death in struggles for the throne; each party claiming to support the true eldest son and rightful heir. The practice of sending the *Oba's* wives to give birth in outlying villages compounded the confusion inherent in a multiplicity of sons and the lack of means for recording the exact date of birth. Of the *Obas* who reigned after Akenzua I only one, his son Eresoyen, enjoyed an undisputed succession.

Benin's recovery from the civil war was aided by a fairly brisk trade with Dutch, English and French merchants. Benin traders sold the European merchandise at a good profit among the Edo and in neighbouring states; the *Oba* too benefitted from trading on his own account and from tolls on shipping and on good passing through his territories. Cloth, which had been the staple of Benin's exports in the 17th century, lost its importance and was replaced in outward cargoes by slaves, including male slaves whose sale abroad had been forbidden since the early 16th century. Most of the slaves sold during the reign of Akenzua I appear to have been captives taken in prolonged campaigns against rebels. The ultimate success of the *Oba* in these wars and indeed in the general restoration of his authority possibly owed something to the firearms with which he was able to equip to his forces once European traders, led by the Dutch, began to sell them to Benin in large quantities at the end of the 17th century.

About the extent of the Benin state in the 18th century we know very little. There is evidence in tradition and in European documents of unrest in several areas: Ishan was chronically disaffected during much of Akenzua's reign; Agbo rebelled against his son, and the next *Oba*, Akengbuda, had to put down a rising in Ugo. To the south, Benin lost control of the lower Benin River to the itsekiri and Ijo. Nevertheless it has to be remembered that no *Oba* of Benin had ever exercised uniform control over a precisely defined area. Since the time of Ewuare his power had been firmly established over the central Edo region, the Benin kingdom proper. Here the *Oba* was the sole arbiter of life and death, all freemen living there were affiliated with the palace associations even though most now neglected to go through the initiation rites, and all bore the Edo markings. For the purposes of tribute, labour services and the supply of soldiers for the armies of the *Oba* villages within the kingdom were entrusted to the supervision of palace and town chiefs. Farther afield in Ishan, Afenmai and among the Urhobo the *Oba* exercised his power indirectly through chief (*enigie*) whose authority derived from investiture by the *Oba* and who rendered in return tribute and military assistance. Still further afield, in Ode Itsekiri or Lagos for example, the influence of Benin rested upon a dynastic relationship, these states being for all practical purposes independent but acknowledging the seniority of Benin by periodic token gifts and ritual exchanges on such occasions as the death of a ruler. At the end of the 18th century this network of influence was still largely intact.

## \* YORUBALAND UP TO 1800

I. A. AKINJOGBIN and E. A. AYANDELE

### Geographical Description

The Yoruba stretch on the west from around the area of Badagry to around Warri and inland until they almost reach the Niger around latitude 9°N. Indeed, certain parts of the Niger formed the boundary between it and the Nupe. Around latitude 5°N, they spread westwards cutting across the whole of Dahomey and reaching into the east of Togo. From the coast, the country rises gradually from low-lying swampy regions with thick undergrowth to forest belt and finally semi- or derived savannah, which in Porto Novo (Ajase), reaches almost to the coast. A large part of the country consists of low flat plateau with only a range of hills, the Yoruba hills, running from east to west and almost cutting the country into two. The weather is fairly stable, with two clearly defined seasons in the year, the rainy and the dry seasons. The rainy season lasts from about April until September, with a short relatively dry spell during the first week of August. The dry season lasts from September to April. From November until February the cold dry wind from the Sahara Desert, called the harmattan, affects the country. In practice, it is never completely dry for rain falls all the year round, only it falls more frequently at certain seasons than at others. As a result of the very favourable climate, conditions are very good for agriculture, making it possible to have two harvests in one year.

The Yoruba must be one of the largest homogenous groups among Africans. Those of them living in Nigeria are currently numbered around fifteen million.<sup>1</sup> When those in Dahomey and Togo are added, they are many more. They inhabit a continuous territory and speak the same language. They are a town dwelling people who, as will be seen in the following pages, built kingdoms and empires along before they came into contact with any Europeans. Their level of political sophistication and technological advancement is high.

### Origins

The historical consciousness of the Yoruba started at Ile-Ife, a town situated in the south-west of Nigeria and numbering in 1963 about one hundred and ten thousand inhabitants. There are two main versions of this consciousness expressed in stories of

1. S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, Lagos, 1956 pp. 15-18.

origin. One version, which was first mentioned in Clapperton's extracts from Sultan Bello's *History* and subsequently popularized by Reverend Samuel Johnson in his *History of the Yorubas* has been repeated by various scholars since. It relates that the Yoruba originally came from the north-eastern area of Africa, (variously supposed to be Egypt, Yemen, ancient Meroe, and Arabia), and settled in Ile-Ife after a journey that must have taken decades if not centuries. In the process, they left colonies of themselves on their way, one of whom, the Gogobir (Gobir?) of present northern Nigeria, are still remembered and often cited both by the Yoruba and the Gogobiri themselves. The party that eventually got to Ife, was led by Oduduwa who, the tradition continues, established a flourishing kingdom and later sent his sons and grandsons to found various Yoruba kingdoms. These kingdoms are variously numbered as seven or sixteen, but when an actual count is taken of those who claim direct descent from Oduduwa they are much more. At the end of the 18th century, fourteen kingdoms, all founded by sons of Oduduwa appear to be large and prosperous.<sup>2</sup> In 1903, the Oni Olubuse named twenty-one kingdoms, excluding Ife, which derived their crowns from Ife.<sup>3</sup> In 1931, the Oni, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, mentioned twenty-six.<sup>4</sup>

The second version, which is increasingly becoming more known in scholarly circles, though it has been generally known among the Yoruba themselves, relates that Ile-Ife was the centre from which the whole world was created. It tells of a period when 'the whole earth' was covered with water (probably a pluvial) and God sent messengers to go and create farmland out of the liquid mass. According to this tradition, the party consisted of Obatala (variously called Orisa Nla, or Orisa Alase) as leader, and sixteen Oye (immortals). They were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied in a white piece of cloth and a cockerel. Somewhere on the way, the tradition continues, Obatala got drunk with palm wine, and Oduduwa seized the paraphernalia of authority from him and eventually led the delegation to the world. The site on which these messengers landed is traditionally identified as the *Oke Oramfe*, in Ife. There, the five pieces of iron were set down, the lump of earth placed on it, and the chicken made to spread the earth with its toes. Farmland appeared as a result, concluded the tradition, and it gradually spread to cover the whole earth. From this episode the town probably took its name Ile-Ife (the house of spreading).

On the surface, these two stories of origin appear contradictory. But they probably can be reconciled. Both have one important point in common. Oduduwa is remembered in both as a leader. What the second myth appears to say, however, is that the origins of Ife are much older than the Oduduwa period which, according to it, succeeded the Obatala period. Other evidences tend to support this interpretation. Ife traditions remember the names of such kings as Kutukutu oba igbo and Osangangan Obamakin,<sup>5</sup> who were much older than Oduduwa. Fragments of *Ikedu*, now an

2. I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dabomey and Its Neighbours 1708-1818*, Cambridge, place of publication 1967, p. 9.

3. *Government Gazette*, Lagos, 18 February 1903.

4. Aderemi Oni of Ife to District Officer, Ife, October 1931 (NNA Oyo Prof. 1 file 133).

5. These names were mentioned to me in January 1958 when I was collecting oral traditions in Ife.

almost source of Yoruba history, have been collected and preserved<sup>6</sup> and they tend to show that the antecedents of the Yoruba are older than the Oduduwa period. The language of the tradition itself is archaic, though unmistakably one from which the modern Yoruba evolved. In that tradition, the names of such kings of Ife as Opereti, Enewe, Awurebe, and Omogberaye are remembered. This tradition relates that Oduduwa and his band were lodged in what was then strangers' quarters in Ile-Ife when they first arrived, although we do not yet know which Oni was then reigning.

Taking all the traditions together, therefore, a possible interpretation is that at Ile-Ife, long before the period of Oduduwa, a monarchical form of government had developed with perhaps a high degree of cultural attainments. Oduduwa, perhaps at the head of a small but highly organized band, who may or may not have been new migrants from outside, took over authority during a period of weakness (when Obatala got drunk). There is increasing evidence to show that the Oduduwa tradition should be seen, not just as a myth of origins of a people, but rather as the end of one and the beginning of another period in the political and constitutional development of the Yoruba.

It is probable that the takeover by Oduduwa occurred during the reign of Obatala. For till today, there is an annual re-enactment, a whole series of ceremonies<sup>7</sup> which recalls the struggle for power between the followers of Obatala and those of Oduduwa and how the Igbo, the last resistance organization against the Oduduwa takeover, was overpowered by the wiles of a beautiful woman, Moremi, and how the reconciliations were finally arrived at. In the final settlement, Obatala lost to Oduduwa the *Are*, the crown, the visible manifestation of authority, but his followers were given functions in the new government<sup>8</sup>. *Are* had continued to this day to be worn by the Oni, the descendant of Oduduwa, as part of the coronation rites and on very important traditional occasion. That the descendants of Obatala have not completely forgotten their former political position is shown by their still current symbolic unwillingness to hear Oduduwa's name mentioned. More than that, it is shown in the installation of Elesun, the head of Obatala worshippers, which is done with pomp and pageantry which is very much like the installation of an Oba.<sup>9</sup>

When the Oduduwa period began is of course impossible to say. The earliest radio carbon dates from archaeological excavations in Ife are those associated with the potsherd pavements. These give a period between mid-10th to mid-11th centuries.<sup>10</sup> Ife traditions remember that these pavements were made during the reign of a woman

6. Mr I. B. Odukoya, a retired school master now a member of the Ijebu Local Schools Board has been collecting this and will soon be publishing his findings.
7. One of these is the annual Obatala festival, held between December and January every year, and another is the Edi festival, in remembrance of Moremi, held in November every year.
8. Chief Fasogbon, "A Short History of Ife" (unpublished manuscript). Chief Fasogbon is about 65 years old and is one of the most knowledgeable historians of Ife.
9. In 1972, I witnessed the installation of new Elesun which was done in every bit like the coronation of an oba. During the ceremony, the Elesun, whenever he was thirty, took only cold *ogi* (corn paste).
10. F. Willet, "Radio-Carbon dates from Ife," *West African Archaeological newsletter*, No. 9, 1968, p. 73.



Oni called Luwo Gbagida, who forced the Ife people to adopt clean habits and worked them so hard that they resolved never again to have another female Oni. We may therefore say that Luwo was probably reigning between the 10th and the 11th centuries. On the best authorities available, Luwo herself is variously listed as the sixteenth or the nineteenth Oni in the Oduduwa dynasty of which the late Sir Adesoji Aderemi, who ascended the throne of Ife in 1930, is the forty-eighth. If Luwo, the sixteenth Oni in the Oduduwa dynasty, was reigning in the 10th century, then Oduduwa himself must have ascended the throne of Ife, perhaps two centuries before.

The next major event that took place in Ife after the Oduduwa takeover was a reorganization of the Yoruba kingdoms that may have been existing before the Oduduwa dynasty and possibly the foundation of new ones. The traditions relate this phase in terms of the dispersal of Oduduwa's children and all of them are virtually unanimous, though some give more details than others. According to one of them, Oduduwa, when he was old and blind, called his children together and ordered them to go and found kingdoms of their own, giving each one a royal symbol. An *Ifa* source gave the background to this dispersal. According to that source, Ile-Ife was hit by a prolonged drought which lasted for many years, causing famine and decimation. No one knew precisely how to solve the problem, although most of the best *Babalawo* (soothsayers) in the land were consulted. Finally, one Agirilogbon, a *babalawo* of Ore Itase in Ile-Ife, counselled emigration.<sup>11</sup> It was probably in accepting this that Oduduwa asked his sons to lead the various groups. The traditions strongly indicate that the emigration was orderly, for the leaders are remembered as having met at a place in Ile-Ife still called *Ita Ijero* (the place of consultation) where they agreed which way each would go and how they were to maintain future contacts. The orderliness and the comradeship are remembered in the traditions of the towns which lay along the routes of dispersal. The princes who went north-westwards and south-westwards are remembered as having journeyed together to a place called Ita Marun<sup>12</sup> in Ipetu-modu. Those who went eastwards and finally settled at Ado, Owo and Benin again are remembered in the various traditions along the route as having journeyed together. Owa Obokun, Onida arara, who later became the leader of the *Ijesha* group, would not appear to have joined this main group, for the tradition relates that he was away on the coast fetching sea water to cure Oduduwa's blindness when the momentous events were taking place at home.<sup>13</sup> These migrations resulted, according to the traditions, in the foundation of many new kingdoms, though it is probable that some only had a change of rulers.<sup>14</sup> Benin would appear to be one of those that simply had a change of rulers. All the most important kingdoms, however, appear to have rulers who were either sons or grandsons of Oduduwa. This may have been the historical origin of the *Ebi* system of government which later grew into a concept of societal organization.

11. See Odu Ofunsa quoted in J.O. George, *Historical Almanac on Yorubaland*.

12. *Ita Marun* means a place where five roads meet.

13. The traditions of *Ijesha* support this, which is reflected in the title of the Oba called Owa Obokun of *Ijesaland*. See also Aderemi, Oni of Ife to District Office, 9 October 1931 (N.N.A. Oyo prof. 1) file 203.

14. Benin tradition as recorded by Egharevba claims that the Oranyan period succeeded the Ogiso period.



It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to know now how many kingdoms resulted from this exercise. As has been pointed out above, the number has ranged from seven to twenty-six on the best traditional authorities. Descent from Oduduwa certainly became the test of legitimacy and it is probable that as kingdoms grew, the original number was increased by induction which gave the later ones as much legitimacy as the earlier ones. It is equally difficult to date the dispersal with any degree of certainty. But if the potsherd pavements were made in the Oduduwa dynasty, then it is probable that the dispersal took place by the end of the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century, since it is said to have taken place at the end of Oduduwa's reign. Further archaeological excavations will, hopefully, shed more light on the problem of chronology and authenticity.

### Growth

The historical developments of most of the kingdoms after the dispersal from Ife are not yet clear, for most of the well-known traditions, or their collectors, have a tendency to skip the events after the foundation and dwell on the relatively recent period. Here, therefore, is a yawning gap in our knowledge of Yoruba history calling for the most urgent and intensive research. From what is known, four types of constitutional and historical developments are, however, discernible, and they range from fairly settled constitutional positions, to highly complex imperial organizations on the one hand, and to a complete lack of any central organization beyond the town level on the other extreme. Comments on this last type can be made briefly here. It appears that in areas which were far removed from the centre, for example in the north-east<sup>15</sup> of Yorubaland bordering on the Niger River and in the extreme north-west, the towns did not develop into large kingdoms with centralized powerful monarchies. This does not make their history any less rich, but it does mean that until they are studied, most of the generalizations about the other monarchies will not apply to them.

Ile-Ife as the 'father-kingdom' and Yoruba 'national' headquarters had a unique type of constitutional and historical growth. Completely surrounded by other Yoruba Kingdoms that acknowledged its 'fatherhood', Ife had no fear of attack from any quarter. Ife therefore did not possess an army and the Onis of Ife were not known to be great military leaders. Instead Ile-Ife took its duties as ritual 'father-kingdom' very seriously. An elaborate chieftaincy system was developed<sup>16</sup> to look after all the known national gods, create and worship more of such gods, bury the remains of the kings

15. H.M.A. Obayemi is engaged in an ongoing research in this area and is coming up with interesting findings which will enrich our knowledge of constitutional developments in Yorubaland.
16. Chief D.O. Ayinde, the Jagunosi of Ife listed over 242 chieftaincy titles in Ile-Ife, out of which 125 belonged to the *Osu* or religious chiefs. He admitted that there are some more titles that he did not know. See D.O. Ayinde: *Awon Oruko Abalaye ni Ile-Ife*. (Ore Ofẹ Press), Ife, 1968.
17. Among the best known African works of art are the bronzes. Since about 1956, the terracottas, moulded in the style of the bronzes, have become better known. F. Willet, *Ife in the History of West African Art*, London, 1967.

brought back from their distant domains and dispense the various symbols to validate the choice of new kings. Only this last duty was performed directly by the ruling Oni, the others being the duties of the Otu Chiefs.

Hand in hand with these spiritual functions went the patronage of art and culture. Reference has already been made to the potsherd pavements during the reign of Queen Luwo, in the 10th century. Traditions relate that all the streets in Ife were thus paved. These Luwo pavements have been noticed in various parts of Yorubaland, which is an indication that other kingdoms emulated this Ife innovation. Another notable development in Ife was art. Various objects were made in wood, stone, clay and bronze. The bronze figures were made through the 'melted wax' process which was a technological advancement of the highest kind.<sup>17</sup> Examples of the objects produced can still be seen in Ife and various museums all over the world. Again, Ife exported its artistic achievements and Benin became the most famous of those who learnt. Other kingdoms such as Owo<sup>18</sup> and Ijebu<sup>19</sup> also learnt and developed their own styles which are as yet little studied, but which may prove as famous as Ife or Benin.

The evolution, after Oduduwa, of the Oni-ship, as the core of government in Ile-Ife, (as distinct from his extra-territorial role as 'father' of the other Yoruba kings), and the changes that occurred in its long history are yet to be studied. What is so far known, however, indicates that in the over one thousand years of the Oduduwa dynasty, the character of the Oni-ship changed. First there is the ceremony of wearing of the Olalufon Crown (apart from the ceremony of wearing the *are*) during the coronation ceremony of each new Oni. The meaning of this may be to emphasize the obligations and accountability of the Oni to the Ife people. Then there is the change in the rule which allowed both male and female descendants of an Oni equal rights of succession to the throne to that which allowed only males. Exactly when this started and when it ended is not quite known, but Luwo's reign is an indication that women could, at one time, be legitimate Oni. Thirdly there was the episode in which Lajamisan, apparently a rich Ife bead trader, made a successful bid for the throne. He could hardly have done this without the support of the Ife chiefs and people, and without offering them acceptable terms. Finally there was the deposition of Ogboru, a descendant of Lajamisan, who was banished to Ife-Odan, ostensibly for reigning for too long but more probably for cruelty.<sup>20</sup> These two latter incidents clearly indicate that the Ife people reserved the power to change the Oni if they were dissatisfied with him. These are, however, no more than glimpses of what may prove to be a rewarding research exercise.

18. Since writing this section, terra cotta objects have been discovered in Owo which clearly belong to the Ife art tradition.

19. Not much as been done on Ijebu art, but there is a bronzes bowl in the Museum of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ife, which came from Ijebu kingdom and which indicates that there will be a great deal of reward for any researcher into this aspect of Ijebu Ife.

20. Oral tradition collected in Ife Odan by I.A. Akinjogbin in 1958. Ife traditions relate that he was deposed for cruelty. Ife Odan traditions relate that it was because he had reigned for too long.

The third type of development may be exemplified by the kingdom of Ketu. Ketu was one of those kingdoms founded by the princes who went westwards from Ife. Its leader, called Soipasan, would appear to have journeyed, according to Ketu traditions, with the leaders of the party that later founded Egba and Oyo.<sup>21</sup> Ketu traditions insist that Soipasan was the elder of these three princes, and the traditions of Oyo and Abeokuta would appear to recognize this. Soipasan and his group first settled at Oke-Oyan, which they soon abandoned for Aro-Ketu. Finally Aro-Ketu itself was abandoned for a more spacious area, named Ketu which was founded under the leadership of Ede, the seventh Alaketu after Soipasan and Owe. In all these wanderings, there is no suggestion that the Ketu group was molested or in anyway subjected to hostile military pressure. Indeed, so secure were they that the original group that came from Ife did not keep together for long but split up and in different directions to found separate towns. Even before Soipasan's death, a party of his group hived off and founded Kilibo. And the population of Aro-Ketu was also split into three before Ketu was founded.

This initial security soon gave way to hostile attacks, probably by the aboriginal inhabitants. Okoyi, the eighth king, was attacked by the Panku people and not being used to warfare, he took refuge in a village named Tobolo. His subjects, however, easily repelled the attack and came to an agreement with the attackers whereby two families of the latter, the Akiniko and Ajahosa, were integrated into the government of the town. Okoyi was, however, rejected for his cowardly acts. The agreement with the Panku people did not appear to have endured for the Ketu palace was again stormed during the reign of Agbo-keji, the thirteenth Alaketu. Like Okoyi, Agbo-Keji fled for refuge in his farm, but his subjects again repelled the attack as they had done during the reign of Okoyi and Agbo-Keji was also executed for his cowardice.

The repeated attacks convinced the people of Ketu that they should take measures to protect themselves. They therefore built a very strong wall around the city which they completed during the reigns of Sa and Epo. After the completion of the wall, the Ketu people appear to have lived in peace for a long time, for the traditions do not remember anything remarkable about the periods of the sixteenth to the thirty-eighth kings beyond their names, the names of their parents and the family from which they were chosen. This may indicate a degree of stability and signify that all the state institutions were then fully developed and functioning as normally as humanly possible. Most of the large Yoruba kingdoms probably developed along the lines similar to Ketu's.

The development of Oyo, the fourth type was a great deal more adventurous from the start.<sup>22</sup> Its foundation has been attributed in the traditions to Oranyan, who is also said to be the founder of the present Benin monarchy. It would appear that Oranyan went (perhaps via Ile-Ife) northwards towards the Niger after leaving Benin and settled on a piece of land pointed out to him by the then king of Bariba (Borgu) after he had been opposed in his forward march by the Tape (Nupe). The site given to him was later called Oyo Ajaka and remained the capital, despite various evacuations,

21. G. Parrinder, *The Story of Ketu*, 2nd ed. Edited by I.A. Akinjogbin, Ibadan, 1967. All that follows in this section on Ketu is taken from this book.

22. This can still be seen standing in Ile-Ife.

until it was finally destroyed and deserted in the fourth decade of the 19th century. But Oranyan himself did not seem to have lived there for long. He moved instead to a place called Oko and probably finally returned to Ife where he died and a memorial, the *Opa Oranyan*<sup>23</sup> was raised on his tomb.

At this early stage, the kings of Oyo were active war leaders as well, not yet surrounded with the aura that confined them to the palace behind ceremonies. Ajaka, who was selected as leader immediately after Oranyan did not appear to be performing the military aspect of his work satisfactorily. He was therefore deposed and replaced by his younger brother, Sango, who was a powerful warrior. Sango's mother was Tapa, an indication that the Yoruba and the Tapa were already intermarrying. It was Sango who eventually established Oyo as an independent kingdom. First he made Oyo independent of Owu,<sup>24</sup> a Yoruba kingdom established earlier on which was probably claiming the right of an 'elder brother'. Secondly he removed his seat of government from Oko where Oranyan had stayed, to Oyokoro or Oyo Ajaka,<sup>25</sup> which had been the original site selected by Oranyan's party, and which was probably much more easily defensible. His reign, however, ended as stormily as it had started, and he is said to have committed suicide as a result of a disagreement with his principal chiefs. His elder brother, Ajaka, who had been deposed earlier, was now recalled, perhaps in the hope that his mildness would now bring some repose from the constant wars of expansion. But even he had changed and he waged a successful war against the Tapa (Nupe) after which he had to establish his internal authority all over again by war. After that, the internal authority of the Alafin was no longer seriously challenged.

The next four rulers (Aganju, Kori, Oluaso and Onigbogi) continued with the duty of building the kingdom and solving whatever constitutional issues arose. Aganju's reign was mainly peaceful and prosperous. Kori was a minor, whose reign therefore raised a constitutional issue for the first time. In solving the problem, the Basorun was first made the regent, then Kori's mother, Iyayun, was made regent until Kori himself was old enough. During his reign the boundary between the Oyo and the Ijesha was fixed, Oyo making Ede its boundary town and Ijesha creating Oshogbo for a similar purpose. Oluaso's reign was long, peaceful and prosperous. Oluaso himself engaged in building palaces, said to have numbered fifty-four. His principal palace was said to have had one hundred and twenty *kobis* (gables)

Disaster struck towards the end of Onigbogi's reign. It had started well in a mood of confidence, but apparently the Tapa, who had been defeated by Ajaka near Sango's reign had continued to watch for a favourable opportunity for revenge. That opportunity came when the Oyo army went to fight against a town called Ita-Ibidun, leaving the capital undefended. It is probable also that the long peaceful reign of Oluaso had weakened the martial spirit of the Oyo. The Tapa therefore invaded the city of Oyo and drove the people out, once again into the Bariba country. The Oyo were accommodated by the Bariba for a while, because Ofinran, the successor to Onigbogi

23. S. Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, Lagos, 1956; first published in 1921.

24. S. Johnson, *History* p. 149. The Owu referred to here is not clear, but it is unlikely to be the Owu destroyed in the 1920s.

25. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 152.



was also partly Bariba through his mother. But the good treatment did not last, and Ofinran collected his people and decided to lead them back to Oyo. The party went through Kusu, where the Alafin was finally initiated into the Ifa mysteries and where the Egungun cult was introduced from the Tapa country. Ofinran died at Kusu, and the journey was resumed by his successor Eguguoju who, after passing through Iju Sanya, founded Igboho and settled there.

Trouble was however not yet over. First the Bariba, from whose territory the Oyo withdrew, attacked them during the reign of Orompoto,<sup>26</sup> brother to Eguguoju. The Oyo had, however, reorganized their forces, and at the battle of Ilayi, the Bariba were defeated after what must have appeared a desperate battle. But in the next reign, that of Ajiboyede, the Tapa, who had been the original cause of evacuating their old capital, again attacked. As in the fight against the Bariba, the battle was also fierce and in the end the Tapa were decisively and convincingly defeated. The defeat of the Tapa, and of the Bariba earlier, paved the way for the return of the Oyo to their ancient capital which was accomplished during the reign of Abipa despite great reluctance by the Oyo chiefs who now firmly settled in their new environment. It has been suggested that this last reoccupation of Oyo Ajaka took place towards the end of the 16th century.<sup>27</sup>

\* The whole experience of Oyo up to this time pointed out a few salient things that played a part in its historical development, moulded its monarchy, and enriched its cultural growth. First, the Oyo had to mix early with non-Yoruba elements, the Tapa and the Bariba, with whom they intermarried. Then, they had to fight first against Owu, for their independence, then frequently against the Tapa and the Bariba for their very survival. In the process, their cohesiveness undoubtedly grew as often happens to people who pass through the same danger. Perhaps a most important result was that they then had a well organized and experienced army, which consisted of not only infantry men as in most part of the remaining Yoruba kingdoms, but also of cavalymen. The power of the monarchy would also appear to have been greatly increased, for Oba continued to lead his subjects to war, and as such, effectively controlled the army.

\* During this period too, other large towns apart from the capital, were being founded. Igboho has already been referred to, and so has Ede. It is probable that Ikoyi, Igbon, Iresa and host of others which were destroyed during the 19th century civil wars were also founded. The internal organization and system of government also evolved during this period. The Basorun title appears to be as early as the Alafin title and would tend to accord well with the Yoruba view of duality of existence, the seen physical world and the unseen abode of the departed spirits, both of which are interdependent. If the Alafin represented the former, the Basorun represented the latter. And the known Oyo traditions up to the end of the 16th century would tend to suggest that both evolved together. Other titles within the Oyomesi rank (the supreme council of state) evolved gradually, and the whole seven of them including the Basorun may have been in existence by the end of the 16th century. Oyo's military organization too

26. S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 161-62. There is a tradition which says that Orompoto was a woman to Alafin.

27. R.S. Smith, "The Alafin in Exile," *J.A.H. Journal of African History*, Vi, 1, 1965.



seemed to have improved tremendously as a result of the events of the preceding century, with the emergence of the cavalry and of the Eso,<sup>28</sup> the highest military class.

By the end of the 16th century, the political organizations of most of the Yoruba kingdoms were probably complete and broadly similar. Each kingdom consisted of a capital town, a number of subordinate towns, villages, markets, and farmlands. Each of the major kingdoms whose rulers claimed descent from Oduduwa ruled a clearly recognized (probably not too well-defined) territory. He lived in the *Aafin* (palace) in a large town, wore a crown made with cowries (*owo*)<sup>29</sup> or later with beads of various colours (*ileke*), surmounted with a certain number of representations of birds and fringed right round in a way to cover the face of the wearer. His slippers (*bata*), fly-whisk, (*irukere*) the *ase* (scepter), and most of the things surrounding him for immediate use were all either made of or decorated with coloured beads. Under him, but ruling various towns and villages, were Obas of lesser ranks, and *baale*. The lesser rank oba particularly if they could claim blood relationship to Oduduwa or another Oba through their mother, had a kind of crown made entirely of white beads (*seefun*). The *baale* did not have any particular distinguishing attire. Nor had the *Oloja* who, on the other hand, constituted a fourth rank of ruler. The *Oloja* title originally would appear to be lower than that of a *baale* and signified someone in charge of a market place. But some market towns grew and some *Olojas* thus became wealthier than some *baale*. The convention also grew that there could be only one *oba* in a town at one moment.

Each *oba* had his supporting chiefs, who advised him on various political issues. They were usually grouped in two parallel lines, those of the right hand who represented the princely interests and those of the left hand who represented the commoners' interests.<sup>30</sup> The leaders of these two ranks constituted the supreme council of state. There were also the religious chiefs, called *Otu* in Ife or *Awo* in other places. These represent the main religious cults within the kingdom. Usually they did not sit down with the secular chiefs, but sat separately in another part of the *aafin*. Civil and religious affairs were however intertwined and no major political decisions were taken without the sanction of the religious chiefs who consulted the various deities as to the appropriateness of the contemplated action. Each trade, each profession, also had its own organization and its own chiefs through whom members could reach or be reached by the king. The civil, religious and trade chiefs as well as some prominent citizens who had no titles but had become influential either through their wealth, their valour or their age, were brought together in another powerful organization called various *Imole*, *Osugbo*, or *Ogboni* in different parts of Yorubaland.

Below the town chiefs were the heads of different families in the town. Simply called *baale* (father of house), they had no titles and except during periods of extreme

28. S. Johnson, *History* p. 73-74. Johnson says there were seventy Eso, but other Yoruba traditions imply that there were a great deal more, at some time as many as one thousand three hundred, but were reduced to seventy.

29. Nowadays oba's crown are made with beads of various colours usually red, blue and white. But every Yoruba child is familiar with the lines: "*Oba ti o dade owo, Oba ti o te pa ileke*" (i.e., The king who wears a crown made of money; The king who has a staff of beads).

30. This arrangement could be reversed as to which side of the oba each group sat.

emergency, were not normally present at council meetings of the town (*ilu*) but they formed the lowest consultative group in town affairs. Some *baale* might also be *ijoye* (chief) and some might be members of one of the powerful organizations running the affairs of the town. In any case the chain of consultation or command went from the king (*oba*) to his chiefs and thence to the *baale* and the citizens, or when circumstances dictated, through the president of a guild to members.

In such a highly organized system, it goes without saying that each person stood in a well-defined, generally recognized relationship to the others. The *oba* enjoyed certain privileges but he also had certain limitations placed on his power. These limitations were included in the *eewo* which were recounted to him during the ceremonies of his coronation and these *eewo* varied from kingdom to kingdom, the *eewo* were designed to curb despotism on the part of the king<sup>31</sup> and his immediate family, to promote harmony among the different elements in the town, particularly where the current ruling dynasty appears to have displaced an earlier one,<sup>32</sup> and to ensure the orderly existence of the people. Just as the king had his *eewo* which he must not violate, so had each chief under him. Equally, the whole town usually had its *eewo*.<sup>33</sup>

The violation of an *eewo* carried heavy penalties or was believed to be capable of bringing untold harm to the community. A king who violated an *eewo* could lose his throne and therefore his life, since an *oba*, once deposed, could no longer live as a common citizen. A chief who violated his *eewo* could lose his title in which case another member of his family succeeded or if the violation was a particularly grievous one, his whole family could lose the title, in which case the title went to another family. The rulers of a kingdom would ensure that no town violated its *eewo* for it was believed that such a violation could cause the destruction of the town.

Over and above this constitutional organization within each kingdom which was generally recognized, there was another very important, though not as well recognized, constitutional organization that bound all the Yoruba kingdoms together. This latter organization derived from the nature of the dispersal of Oduduwa's children. Because the emigrating princes were all sons and grandsons of Oduduwa, it came to be accepted that all the kings were brothers to one another. And because Oduduwa, their father, remained at Ife, it would also appear to have been accepted that whoever occupied the seat of Oduduwa, stood in the position of father to all the others. This is what has been called the *ebi* system or concept.<sup>34</sup> The gathering at Ita Ijero already referred to, which preceded the actual departure from Ife would seem to have given a precise historical origin to this concept.

That the departing princes saw themselves as the same *ebi* and were determined to maintain the link is shown by one practice which has survived till the present. When-

31. In Ife the Oni is enjoined during the coronation that one of the things he must not do was to defecate on people!

32. In various parts of Ekiti, there are chiefs whom the ruling *oba* must not see.

33. There are various examples of towns where certain crops must not be grown or certain industries practised. Certain traditions say that the pottery industry is forbidden within Ife walls. Beans must not grow freely on public wastelands in Iperumodu.

34. See I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dabomey*, pp. 15-16. In spite of many attempts to deny this, actual practice among the Oba of Yorubaland till today appears to confirm it.

ever any *oba* regarded as a direct descendant of Oduduwa died, his movable properties, particularly his dresses, were divided among the remaining important *obas*, his living 'brothers'. This practice of inheritance (*ogun pinpin*) or (*ogun jije*) is perhaps the strongest evidence that the kings continued to regard themselves as 'brothers'. For among the Yoruba, only the immediate relatives could inherit the movable property of a deceased person. Exactly, how many *obas* were entitled to such inheritance is not known but that it is still practised can be shown by two instances in the present generation. In 1932, the Oni, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, who ascended the throne in 1930, said that he had to send part of his predecessor's clothes to certain principal *obas* in Yorubaland:

I waived my claims over my predecessor's clothes, trinkets, money, wives and other goods. The chiefs had no alternative than to acquiesce in my decision since I am the principal party concerned but by the importunity of the chiefs, I agreed to some clothes being sent to certain principal *obas* of Yorubaland with the consent of the family, their father having received many such legacies from abroad.<sup>35</sup>

The other confirmatory example showing this practice of 'brotherly inheritance' among Yoruba *obas* was revealed in 1945 during a dispute between Ibadan and Oyo. The dispute itself is irrelevant here, but one of the things that caused annoyance in Ibadan against Oyo, was that when the clothes of the late Alafin were sent to the principal *obas* of Yorubaland, none was sent to the ruler of Ibadan. When the District Officer at Ibadan wanted to settle the quarrel, he called a meeting of the Ibadan Native Authority Inner Council where

The Honourable Mr O'bisesan said, "The position of the matter was fully known to everybody . . ." He would like to know from the District Officer whether he was aware that after the death of Alafin, some of his properties, according to custom, were inherited by the Alake, the Oni, the Owa and the Oba of Benin.<sup>36</sup>

In return for such inheritance, the other living princes also performed funeral rites for their dead brother.<sup>37</sup>

It is therefore fairly certain that all the Yoruba kings look on one another as 'brothers' belonging to the same *ebi* and on the country as one vast extension of the *ebi*. As long as each prince kept his obligation and the *eewo* the generality of the Yoruba people were only directly touched by the government within their own kingdom, and beyond the general knowledge that they shared a common culture, they could safely ignore other kingdoms.<sup>38</sup> However, if a king broke an *eewo* then the repercussions affected everyone in Yoruba country.

35. The Oni to District Officer, 10th march 1932. (N.N.A., Oyo Prof. 1 file 133).

36. Minutes of the Ibadan Native Authority Inner Council Meeting held at the Chambers, Mapo Hall on Monday 22 January 1945.

37. Oral information supplied to me by the Oni, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, in June 1969.

38. This is why writers on Yoruba History such as Robert Smith in his *History of Yorubaland*, London, 1969 and R.C.C. Law in his Ph.D. thesis. "Yorubaland up to 1800", Birmingham, 1971 tend to equate the constitutional arrangement in Oyo kingdom with the constitution of Yorubaland.

The Ita Ijero gathering appears to have laid down certain responsibilities and to have prescribed certain *eewo* for each departing prince in order to ensure the future peaceful relationship of the *ebi*. One of such agreements reached at Ita Ijero appears to have been that Ile-Ife should be kept absolutely inviolate and must never be attacked by the departing princes or their descendants. This is in keeping with the Yoruba belief that you should not strike your father or desecrate your *orirun*, which is at the same time the place of origin and the final resting place of the spirits of the ancestors. This was probably why a living oba of Benin was prohibited from seeing Ile-Ife and why only his corpse (some say only his head) was brought back to Ife to be buried at place still called *Orun Oba Ado* (the heaven of the kings of Benin) in Ile-Ife.<sup>39</sup> It was probably why the Alafin was given the injunction, when taking the *Ida Oranyan* at accession, that he must not fight Ife with it.<sup>40</sup>

The second agreement which the departing princes appear to have reached was a periodic renewal of their contact with the ancestors at Ife. In the religious aspect, this appeared to have taken the form of sending items for the worshipping of certain important national gods, such as Oduduwa, Ogun and Ifa. In the political sphere (which was hardly differentiated) it took the form of renewing the original symbols of royalty. Whenever a Benin prince brought the remains of his predecessor to Ife, he also sought sanction from Ife for his own succession. The sanction would appear to be given by emissaries sent out from Ife to accompany those of Benin, and bearing whatever it was that conveyed the approval. This tradition was re-enacted in 1916, when Aguobasimi became the Oba of Benin as Eweka II after the death of the deposed Ovonramwen.<sup>41</sup> For most other kingdoms, the giving of the *Ida* or *Ada*, (sword), would seem to have been very common. Oyo still adheres to this ceremony. There are indications that Ila continued to observe it until the disturbances in the 19th century ended the importance of that kingdom. Owu had an iron chain called *Epe*. Others probably had their symbols which will become known when more researches are conducted.

Other conventions grew up which tended to confirm that the Yoruba regarded their kingdoms and their country as a bigger version of the *ebi*. Two of the appellations of an oba are the terms *baba* (father) and *yeye* (mother), an indication that the subjects look up to him as the parent of all his subjects. The convention also grew that each subject, to claim rights in a particular kingdom, had to be born there, that is, the ties of the society are those of blood. Strangers do get inducted and are made citizens in exceptional circumstances, but the ancestry of such families are remembered for a long time, indeed it is hardly ever forgotten,<sup>42</sup> an indication that they are not usually accepted as completely integrated.

39. The present Oba of Benin continue to observe this *eewo*. In 1937, during an Oba's conference (*Pelupelu*) held at Ife, he refused to stay in Ile-Ife. Instead he remained in Modakeke, outside the Ife wall for the duration of the conference.

40. This tradition also continues to be observed. The Alafin, Oba Lamidi Adesoyemi III who ascended the throne in December 1970, got the injunction.

41. F.H. Rosedale (D.O. Ife) to the Commissioner, Oyo 5th May 1916 (N.N.A. Oyo Prof. 1 file 133).

42. In Samuel Johnson, *History*: there are many examples of high-ranking political officers of many generations whose ancestry as *Tapa* or *Baribe* are not forgotten.



### The Oyo Empire

Of all the Yoruba kingdoms, the one that eventually acquired the largest territory and became a veritable empire was Oyo. It emerged as a strong kingdom in the middle of the 16th century from the Bariba and Tapa attacks with an army composed of both cavalry and infantry. After a short period spent in consolidating, it embarked on its imperial expansion by about the beginning of the 17th century.

The Alafin who started this movement was Obalokun, Aganna Erin.<sup>43</sup> He placed the first Ajele at Ijanna in Egbado, an indication that Oyo's conquest had gone far down towards the coast. However it was not towards the southwest alone that Oyo was expanding; but it also appeared to be expanding south-eastwards, for an expedition by Obalokun is remembered to have been heavily defeated at the hands of the Ijesha (Arera.)

During the next reign, that of Ajagbo, who probably ascended the throne around the middle of the 17th century, military expeditions continued. Ajagbo created the *Are-ona-Kakanfo* title and bestowed it on a warrior friend of his called *kokorogangan*.<sup>44</sup> He also instituted the system of sending out four expeditions at the same time, one under the Basorun, another under the *Agbakin*, the third under the *Kakanfo* and the fourth under the *Asipa*. The conquest towards the coast continued and his army seemed to have got to the coast with the conquest of Weme. Some parts of the Egba kingdom, lying eastwards of Weme also seem to have been added to Oyo imperial rule during his reign. Oyo's imperial expansion continued right through the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century.

The highest watermark of this expansion was the conquest of the kingdom of Dahomey between 1726 and 1730.<sup>45</sup> The Aja, who inhabited the kingdoms of Allada, Whydah, Tori, Popo and Dahomey, are a people closely related to the Yoruba in their culture and their historical development. They have a tradition of migrations which connects them with Ketu, and ultimately with Ife. Most of their gods such as Xevioso, Legbara, Lisa, appear to have been derived from the Yorubaland. Allada was the 'father kingdom' of the group that finally constituted the enlarged kingdom of Dahomey and was probably founded towards the end of the 16th century by Dagbagrigenu.

The first invasion of the Aja country was in 1698 when the coastal kingdom of Allada was conquered. The conquest gave Oyo a political interest in the area. When in 1724, Agaja, king of Dahomey, invaded Allada and incorporated its territories, Oyo interests were adversely affected. And in 1726, Oyo invaded Dahomey and inflicted a convincing defeat. Dahomey's successful invasion of Whydah in 1727 again brought the Oyo down in 1728, but in a series of campaigns between then and 1730, Dahomey was reduced to a tributary state. In the settlement that was first made in 1730, and confirmed in 1748, Dahomey's tributary status was regularized. For the rest of the 18th century, the Dahomey kingdom remained a dependency of Oyo. This was a great feat, whether it is considered in military, administrative or political terms.

43. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 168.

44. s. Johnson, *History*, pp. 168-69.

45. I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, chapter 3.



By 1750, therefore the Alafin of Oyo was emperor of a territory that included the Oyo kingdom, the whole of Egba and Egbado, some part of Igbomina, the whole of Ajase kingdom, the whole of Weme kingdom, the whole of Dahomey kingdom and parts of Tapa and Ibariba. It controlled a sea coast from about Whydah to just east of Badagry, and the territory extended for perhaps more than two hundred miles inland.

In spite of its enormous size, compared with other surrounding Yoruba kingdoms, it did not throw over the agreements reached at Ita Ijero before the dispersal from Ife, and the Oyo authorities continued to send to Ife to propitiate the spirits of the ancestors and obtain the Ida Ajase from Ife for each new Alafin.

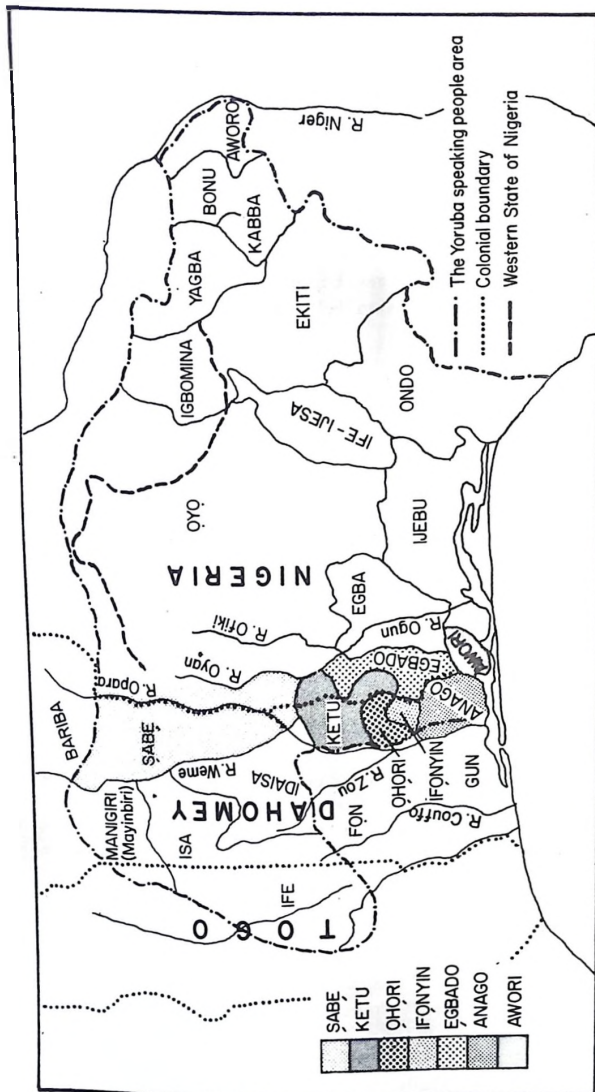
The bringing together of such a vast territory under a single administration was bound to have economic advantages. Unfortunately since there were no statistics for Oyo during the 18th century, it is unlikely that there will ever be absolute proof. But there are indications in the oral traditions, that wealth increased as a result of increased economic activity. Alafin Onisile is said to have made seven silver doors for the seven entrances of his sleeping apartment. During the same reign the *sekere* drum is said to have been made with very expensive material. Trade routes led in all directions and were well and regularly maintained. In peace time the security on the roads was assured. The fact that the security of these routes was still excellent during the early part of the 19th century, when central administration had broken down in Oyo,<sup>47</sup> was admirable evidence of the efficiency of Oyo rulers. The acquisition of Dahomey gave Oyo greater access to the European trade, although this was not entirely advantageous to Yoruba industrial growth. For instead of Oyo increasing the sale of its own manufactured cloth in international markets, it imported European ones in larger quantities. The increase in the number of slaves exported through Oyo territory did not bring lasting advantages to Oyo. But on the whole, the internal trade generated by the expansion, vastly increased and was beneficial in a way that the external trade was not.

However the addition of such a vast area created a number of problems. The basic one was how to govern the territories, maintain peace and order and at the same time prevent breakaways. The administrative problems appear to have been solved by the appointment of *Ajele* (intendants). Where the territory already had a ruler, such as in Dahomey, the *Ajele* became a kind of colonial governor without whose consent the local ruler could not take any major political or economic decision and through whom the annual tributes were sent to Oyo. Where the territory had no recognizable ruler before Oyo conquest, such as at Ijanna, the *Ajele* virtually became a sub-king. The *Ajele*, in conjunction with the local rulers also saw to the maintenance of law, order and the trade routes. As long as Oyo's military might remained supreme, there were no threats of breakaways.

Perhaps the most persistent problem was how to distribute power, which had accrued from the acquisition of the empire, among the ruling circles in the capital city of Oyo. As has been seen, the constitution of Oyo, like all the other constitutions of Yoruba kingdoms, was carefully balanced in its distribution of power between the *Alafin*, his princely chiefs, his non-princely chiefs, the religious priests and prominent

<sup>46</sup> S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 176-77.

<sup>47</sup> He Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the interior of Africa*, London, 1829, pp. 13-14.



The principal western Yoruba groups and their neighbours

citizens as well as the young men of the capital. When large territories were acquired, this balance would appear to have been tipped in favour of the *Alafin*, since it was he who appointed the *Ajele* to the conquered territories. In some cases, some of the *Ajele* he appointed were of non-Oyo origin, and were therefore people who depended on him directly. This was the case with *Ijanna*,<sup>48</sup> and may have been the case in other areas. This rendered the kings enormously powerful, and tended to make them despotic.

It is probably in the light of the increasing power and despotism of the king, and the *Oyomesi's* desire to curtail such powers, that the quarrel between the *Oyomesi* and the *Alafin* in the 17th and 18th centuries must be seen. Johnson lays emphasis on the growing despotism of the 17th century kings through the recounting of small moral stories.<sup>49</sup> The chiefs became the watchdogs of the peoples' liberty and in the 17th century were usually able to depose a tyrannical king without questioning the position of the monarchy or being able to stop the next *Alafin* from being tyrannical. Sometimes, as in the case of *Odarawu* and *Jayin*,<sup>50</sup> the kings took their rejection mildly and committed suicide. At other times, as in the case of *Kanran*, the king fought back and had to be forcibly dislodged.<sup>51</sup> What is important to notice is that these quarrels between the *Alafin* and his chiefs were not 'constitutional crises' in the sense that the chiefs were questioning the whole propriety of the monarchy. Each party accepted its own and the other's rights and obligations within the Oyo constitution. The quarrel would appear to be about how to allocate the extra-constitutional and political powers conferred through imperial conquest. Seen in this light, it is easy to explain why, despite the frequent depositions of the *Alafin* in the 17th and 18th centuries, imperial expansion continued unhindered.

The problem however endured remarkably long and was never really solved. Throughout the 17th century the chiefs continued to demand the abdication (and consequently death) of the *Alafins* in a bid to curb their growing power. In the first decades of the 18th century, they added to the king's abdication the automatic abdication and death of the *Aremo* (crown prince) as well. Many of the palace chiefs who had been associated with the king in the wielding of power also had to die with the king.

Gberu, the *Alafin* in the 1730s used his constitutional powers and appointed *Jambu*, his personal friend, as *Basorun* perhaps in the hope that he might thus align the chairman of the *oyomesi* with his own interests. But the move did not work. For Gberu and his friend, *Basorun Jambu*, soon fell out.<sup>52</sup> In 1754, *Basorun Gaha* moved directly to deprive the *Alafin* of a great deal of the economic base of power by substituting his own relations for the *Alafin's Ajele* in the tributary towns. But all that seemed to have happened was that *Basorun Gaha* became as powerful and as despotic as the kings he was supplanting. In 1774, after twenty years of *Gaha's* experiment, *Abiodun*, the *Alafin* was able to arouse popular support against *Gaha* and in favour of

48. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 168.

49. A whole section of Johnson's book, covering the reign of eleven kings was captioned "A Succession of Despotic and Shortlived Kings", S. Johnson, *History* pp. 168-77.

50. S. Johnson, *History* pp. 169-70.

51. Johnson, *History*, p. 170.

52. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 175.

the monarchy. Abiodun probably hoped to tip the scale permanently in favour of the monarchy through a system of ruthless political executions. He not only ordered the extermination of all the members of Gaha's family, but also "suppressed or executed all those known or suspected to have been Gaha's friends secretly".<sup>53</sup> Abiodun no doubt secured peace at home and prosperity followed his expansion of trade, particularly when he made Ajase the principal Oyo port. Peace and prosperity brought popular support to the monarchy, and Abiodun's reign has remained in the popular myth of Oyo as the most glorious period.

But his success produced another result as well. Gaha's friends and sympathisers who were all exterminated probably included all the military chiefs who had been defending the people's rights against monarchical despotism. Consequently, the army was badly weakened and the very source of the king's power started to be grievously eroded when the outlying provinces of the empire started to declare independence. In 1783,<sup>54</sup> the Bariba part under Oyo successfully declared independence, then Egba,<sup>55</sup> then the Tapa part in 1791.<sup>56</sup> And in the last twenty years of the 18th century, the coastal dependencies were in constant revolt.

Although the basic political issue concerned the limit of power to be exercised by the king, other issues were of course usually associated with the quarrel between one particular king and his chiefs. Odarawu was deposed for petty vendetta; Kanran was alleged to be generally wicked; Jayin was deposed for allegedly causing the death of his own *Aremo* who had been caught committing adultery with one of the *Alafin's* wives. Ariyibi was deposed because he "had no respect for age, or rank, but terribly abused his power"; and for ordering the execution of the parents of one of his wives for some indiscreet remark that she had made to him in his bathroom.<sup>57</sup> It is also possible that issues of immediate policy decisions contributed to the differences. After the final submission of Dahomey in 1748, there may have been genuine disagreements between the kings and the military leaders about what policy to pursue next—continued military expansion or consolidation and exploitation of the existing territory. The military families, with the traditions of glorious victories behind them, may have wished to pursue unlimited expansion, whilst the kings, supported by the traders may have wanted to call a halt to military adventurism.<sup>58</sup>

In the one hundred years of this struggle, the central issues at stake, changed subtly logically from the diminution of the king's powers to a constitutional crisis properly so called, in which the rights of each party were being questioned by its opponents. Up to the 1730s, the *Alafin* simply took their punishments and were succeeded by their sons or relations. Gberu's action in appointing a *Basorun* from a non-*Basorun* family

53. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 186; See also I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century—a reassessment, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 1966, pp. 449-60.

54. I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey* p. 164.

55. Exactly when Egba became independent is not known, but it is generally agreed to be during Abiodun's reign 1774-89.

56. I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey* p. 175.

57. S. Johnson, *History* pp. 168-172.

58. I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire" in *Journal of pre-Historical Society of Nigeria*, III, 3, 1966 pp. 449-60.

showed the monarchy's determination no longer to be bound by the rules that limited the appointment to a family. Gaha, by letting it be seen for twenty years that he, the *Basorun*, was the power in the land, had challenged the supremacy of the king even in the metropolis. Abiodun's attempt at eliminating the overmighty subjects in 1774 implied that the monarchy meant to be boss not only in imperial territories, but also in the metropolis. By refusing the *Basorun's* call to abdicate and resisting it successfully, he swept aside the greatest constitutional provisions which the *Basorun* and his chiefs exercised against the excesses of the monarchy.

Events in the last decades of the 18th century brought issues to a head. Awole, the *Alaḥin* who ascended the throne in 1789, found himself in a fairly weak position. The empire had started to crumble in the last years of Abiodun's reign and Awole's army suffered a crushing military defeat at the hands of the Bariba in 1791. This eroded still further the tottering economic base of the king's power by sealing off the supply of slaves which had become an important export commodity since Abiodun's reign. Tributes from the Egba were no longer forthcoming. Dahomey was in the throes of economic depression and was therefore not a rich dependency.

In an attempt to improve the position of the monarchy, Awole succeeded first in alienating the sympathy of all the other Yoruba and then in uniting the general Oyo population and the chiefs against himself. In 1793, he ordered the invasion of Apomu because he had once been punished by the *Baale* of the village for attempted man-stealing and slave trading while he was still a prince. Apart from the fact that this was a very bad *casus belli*, he was committing two other heinous crimes. In Yoruba traditional law, a market must not be burnt or in any other way disturbed. Anyone who contravened this law earned the death penalty. Apomu was a market town used not only by Oyo, but also by Egba, Owu, Ijebu and Ife kingdoms. To ask that such a market be destroyed was hardly calculated to earn the goodwill of the other users of the market. A more important crime, however, was that the market was within Ife territory. By giving such an order, he had contravened an *eewo* not to use the *Ida Oranyan* taken at his coronation against Ife. To a non-Yoruba, this may be insignificant, but to a Yoruba the breach of an *eewo* is the one thing he would seek strenuously to avoid. For Awole, the breach actually meant that he had absolved all his subjects from any oath of allegiance to himself. And this may have been why, after his orders to attack Apomu, no orders of Awole were obeyed. When he ordered that a stolen Koran should be traced and restored to the owner, the *Basorun* replied point blank that it could not be found.<sup>59</sup>

As if the breach of the *eewo* was not enough, Awole then ordered the sack of Iwere, a town which had sentimental connections with Oyo. This finally united the populace and the chiefs against him. He was asked to commit suicide which he did with ill grace.

Awole's abdication and suicide were different from the previous ones. Whereas in earlier cases, a new *Alaḥin* would have been installed with full powers, Awole's successors had no powers at all. This may have been because they did not complete the coronation rites by taking the *Ida Oranyan* from Ife or because there had emerged a large proportion of strong men who decided they had had enough of monarchy.

59. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 190.



Adebo who immediately succeeded Awole, reigned nominally for about one hundred and thirty days and never had any authority.<sup>60</sup> Ojo Agunbambaru who, for reasons of his own decided to prop the power of the monarchy got no support and his mercenary army was defeated.<sup>61</sup> Maku who presumed to ascend the throne after Adebo, although apparently personally brave, became a laughing stock in the capital.<sup>62</sup> There then ensued a period of interregnum, said by Bishop Ajayi Crowther to be five years, but which may have lasted very much longer if the circumstances of the times are taken into consideration.<sup>63</sup>

In 1796, the powerful chiefs inherited the empire, but they did not inherit peace, and the empire was, for all practical purposes, at an end. With the collapse of the central administration no one was in a position to maintain peace and order and the various provincial chiefs who had the means started to reduce the areas under themselves to obediences.<sup>64</sup>

Constitutional crisis, although central in the issues that finally brought down the Oyo empire, was probably not the only reason for the collapse. There was no doubt a military weakness. Soon after the ascension of Abiodun, there was no longer any mention of the famous Oyo cavalry. This may be either because there was some problem with the horse trade itself or because Oyo was having problems, financial or otherwise, in procuring them, or just simply that Abiodun neglected the cavalry. The independence of the Tapa, and therefore the emergence of a hostile territory along the trade route to Kulfo and Borno whence the horses came, was bound to affect the safety of the trade route northwards and therefore the quantity of available horses. Tapa independence must also have caused the army dealt for Lionel Abson, an Englishman then resident at Whydah, reported that the defeat of the Oyo army was heavy.<sup>65</sup>

There may also have been economic causes as well. The impression from Johnson's *History* is that Oyo was prosperous during Abiodun's reign. This prosperity appears to have been based on an expanded trade in slaves through the port of Ajase (Porto Novo) which Abiodun guarded jealously. However, experience in Dahomey during the 18th century has shown that prosperity based on the slave trade was shortlived as slave raiding tended to destroy its own sources of supply and to discourage other productive activities as well. Moreover, events in Europe in the last decade of the 18th century, the French Revolutionary Council's abolition of the slave trade and its declaration of war on slaving ships, and the Napoleonic wars in Europe tended to cause a diminution in the European slaving activities in West Africa. And with Dahomey in the grip of economic depression in the last quarter of the 18th century, with Bariba, Egba and Tapa (Nupe) independent, the economic advantages accruing to Oyo from its imperial possession must have dwindled considerably.

A very important element in the collapse, which may never really be fully known, was the degree of personality conflict. Recorded traditions tend to suggest that this

60. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 193.

61. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 194-95.

62. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 196.

63. I.A. Akinjogbin: "A Chronology of Yoruba History 1789 to 1840," *Odu*.

64. S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 188-96.

65. I.A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey*, pp. 175-76.

element loomed almost larger than other issues. It is related that Awole and Afonja were personal enemies.<sup>66</sup> According to some sources, this was because Afonja had lost the contest to be made Alafin instead of Awole. According to others it was because Afonja had caused Awole as a prince trading at Ilorin, to be publicly flogged and deprived of his Ifa paraphernalia. Equally, an *Eso*, Lafianu, the *Owota*, was also said to have been the king's enemy, because someone under his protection had been legally punished.<sup>67</sup> Ojo Agunbambaru, a son of Gaha was accused of secretly wanting to pay back old scores for his father's execution, against a number of prominent Oyo citizens, including Afonja, Adegun the Onikoyi, and the *Owota*. How much all these added up is uncertain but it may well have been that personal differences prevented members of the ruling circle from viewing grave issues with the deserved objectivity.

What is clear is that the collapse of the Oyo empire was not caused by the invasion of the Fulani, who by the time were still a wandering band within the Hausa kingdoms. The Oyo empire collapsed eight years before the first Fulani attack on Gobir, the first Hausa kingdom won by the *jihād* of Usman dan Fodio. It is also doubtful whether the empire collapsed because of the revolt of the provinces that discovered they could impose their will on the capital.<sup>68</sup> The revolt the metropolitan provinces followed, but did not precede, the collapse of central authority and the successful reassertion of independence, through military action, of some of the outlying provinces of the empire.

Exactly what had been happening within the other Yoruba kingdoms since the beginning of the 17th century when Oyo launched its imperial expansion remains obscure until further research is done. Indications now are that some of them remained strong and virile, though they did not expand as much as Oyo. We have seen that Ijesha forces were strong to repel decisively an Oyo invasion launched during the reign of *Alafin* Obalokun, perhaps early in the 17th century. Indications are also that the kingdom of Owu was fairly strong and that the Owu were generally admired for their bravery.<sup>69</sup> Other kingdoms such as Ife and Ketu, appear to have carried on in their uneventful splendour. However, with the fall of the Oyo monarchy and the collapse of the Oyo empire, most Yoruba kingdoms became once again involved in active constitutional re-appraisal and a great deal of political upheaval which was to last the whole of the 19th century.

With the collapse of central authority, in Oyo various local rulers and adventurers started to reduce areas under themselves, and others not directly under themselves, to subjection. In what is now Oshun division, but called *Epo* district at the beginning of the 19th century, a band called themselves *Ogo were* (literally, young glories)<sup>70</sup> but were quickly suppressed by Afonja who knew what harm leaderless military adventurers could cause. In 1818, Dahomey the only remaining important tributary kingdom successfully declared independence. Around 1823, Afonja proclaimed what, in modern parlance, would be called a revolution of the peasants when "all the Hausa slaves in the adjacent towns hitherto employed as barbers, rope-makers and cowherds,

66. S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 190-91.

67. R.C.C. Law: "The Oyo Empire up to 1800", Ph.D. Birmingham 1971, holds this view.

68. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 206.

69. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 197.

70. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 193.

now deserted their masters and flocked to Ilorin under the standard of Afonja, the *Kakanfo*, and were protected against their masters."<sup>71</sup> No doubt there were more Yoruba than Hausa elements under Afonja's banner. They all called themselves *Jamaa*, and had *Kende* (a type of ring) as their distinguishing mark. Afonja had taken a momentous decision, the implications of which only became progressively clear as time went on.

When Afonja started his peasant revolution, other Yoruba kingdoms were in the midst of another unpremeditated revolutionary war, the Owu War, the most devastating revolutionary war they had fought probably since the dispersal from Ife. The immediate cause of this war was that Amororo, the *Olowu*, attacked Ife territory some time during the second half of the 19th century, and caused extensive damage, burning villages as far as Iwaro, about ten miles to Ile-Ife itself. According to Johnson, the *Olowu* was encouraged to do this by Adegun, the *Onikoyi*, and Afonja, the *Kakanfo*, on the pretext that slave raiding was going on within Ife territory. Whether this was true or not, and it is doubtful as Ife did not have any army, one conclusion that can be drawn from this action is that a very important section of the rulers of Yoruba country, including the *Olowu* himself a direct descendant of Oduduwa and a crowned head, no longer regarded the *eewo* not to attack Ife as something binding.

With this action by Owu the fight against monarchical institutions and the traditional system of Yoruba government had spread from Oyo to the very centre of the system. Traditions, recorded later in the 19th century, imply that the ruling *Oni* of Ife, Akinmoyero, Odunle bi ojo, using his reserve of traditional powers in such a terrible emergency ordered Owu to be destroyed and never again to be inhabited. There was, it would appear still a sufficiently large part of Yorubaland which was prepared to carry out *Oni's* bidding. First the Ife decided to do this themselves by attacking Owu, but, never having really been military men, they were heavily defeated. Soon, however, they were joined by large numbers of Yoruba elements who appear still to have believed sufficiently in the old traditions to be willing to defend them. Among these were the Ijebu, and large numbers of Oyo elements who by now were probably unorganized masses fleeing southwards from the destruction in the northern Yoruba country.<sup>72</sup> The details of the war need not delay us. A regular siege of Owu started around 1821. By 1825, the three large towns, Owu, the capital, Erunmu and Ogbera had been destroyed. The Egba, next door neighbours of Owu, were accused by the victorious army of co-operating with the vanquished, though all they probably had done was to stand aloof. In any case, they too were attacked. Egba was of course only recently independent from Oyo and was probably not yet strongly organized. In one single day, the most important Egba towns were destroyed.<sup>72</sup>

While the Owu War was raging in the south, the north continued in the confusion of the civil wars.<sup>73</sup> The sequence of the events during this period is uncertain. What appears probable is that Afonja's bid to form a peasant republic under himself misfired. Not for the first time in Yoruba history, the strangers he had invited to aid him turned against him, seized the leadership from his descendants after killing him in battle and turned the movement into the thrust of the Fulani *jihad* into Yorubaland.

71. S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 206-207.

72. S.O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours: 1842-1872*, Oxford, 1957, pp. 13-14.

This event awoke the quarrelling Oyo leaders to the real dangers they were now facing and two unsuccessful attempts were made,<sup>73</sup> possibly before 1830, to dislodge the Fulani rulers from Ilorin. They were still too disunited and a meeting held in Ikoyi, perhaps around 1830, to get a united Oyo front broke up without reaching an agreement.<sup>74</sup>

By then the face of the Yoruba country had been changed. Out of the ruins of northern Oyo towns, of Owu and Egba, new edifices were emerging by 1830. Ibadan and Abeokuta and later Ijaye were founded. These towns reflected the ideas which the issues in the last day of the Oyo empire had raised. It is significant that Ibadan and Ijaye, the two towns whose new rulers and inhabitants were predominantly Oyo elements, rejected the monarchical form of government and its implications. The Ibadan particularly prided themselves as a group who had nothing but contempt for crowns. The Egba decided on a federal type of constitution, in which kings were recognized but authority was decentralized. Side by side with these, however, the traditional systems were being tenaciously practised, notably by Ife and Ijebu. One of the very many issues implicit in the Yoruba wars of the 19th century was the form of government that was suitable for holding Yorubaland together.

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73. S. Johnson, *History*, pp. 200-202.

74. S. Johnson, *History*, p. 211.

## STATES AND PEOPLES OF THE NIGER-BENUE CONFLUENCE AREA

ADE OBAYEMI

The peoples with which this chapter is concerned, even if some receive no attention are the Igala, the Bassa Komo, the Idoma and Alago, the Tiv, the Afo (or Eloyi), the Koro, the Gade, the Igbirra, the north-eastmost Yoruba, some Gbari (Gwari) and the Nupe. The terms Nupe and Idoma are used here in the wider linguistic sense, including the Ebe, Kyede, Bassa Nge, Gbedegi, Dibo and Kakanda under the Nupe heading, and the Igede, Agatu and others under Idoma.<sup>1</sup> The north-east Yoruba are included here not only because they live in the Niger-Benue confluence area, but because they have been historically as involved with other confluence area peoples as they are with other Yoruba-speaking peoples.

The problems in a historical study of the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area, especially for the pre-19th century or pre-jihad period are numerous. The first of these is in regard to source materials. The oral traditions that have been recorded are copious, but uneven for the entire area. Recorded and processed information which bear on the history of the confluence area societies are, for the most part, socio-logical.<sup>2</sup> Two specifically historical studies (on the Igbirra Tao and the Nupe) are essentially post-1800 histories: these discuss the pre-jihad era as introductions to their main themes.<sup>3</sup>

The second problem is presented by the sheer number, sizes and diversity of the peoples and their polities. These range from groups like the Nupe, Igala, the Igbirra of Panda and of Igu and the Alago who had evolved the kingdom type of centralized

1. For definitions of these societies, and the question of identity, see C.D. Forde (ed.), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*. (Int. Afr. Inst.) London, and for more on the Nupe see S.F. Nadel, 1942 *A Black Byzantium: The kingdom of Nupe in Northern Nigeria*. O.U.P. 1955 (pp. 12-26) and O. & C.L. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*. (Cape Town 1919). The earliest, and best summary of these identifications are contained in Baikie, W.B. *Narrative of an exploring voyage up the Rivers Kuwora and Binue*, in 1854. (London 1856) Appendix D. pp. 425-445.
2. S.F. Nadel, 1942, *A Black Byzantium* and J.S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom* (O.U.P. 1968).
3. Y.A. Ibrahim, 1968, *The search for political leadership in a Nigerian Community, Zaria*, unpub.) Mason, M. 1970. *The Nupe Kingdom* . . .



state, to the Idoma who governed themselves with the clan or sub-clan as the political unit, the Igbara Tao (the Okene area) who had five priest chiefs, the Afo and the various north-east Yoruba where the village or village group made up of hamlets were essentially an independent 'state', and the Tiv, with an even more segmented type of political organization.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the diversity in the nomenclature and in the orthography of the names as they exist in the written records, especially of the 19th century and of the early colonial phase, make the picture still more confusing. The Mitshi, or Munshi of the early texts refer to the Tiv. The name Kakanda was frequently used in the middle of the 19th century to refer jointly to the Ihabe, Abinu, Oworo, Ikiri, Ijumu, Bassa Nge, some Igbirra as well as to the Kakanda 'proper'. The name Akpoto or Okpoto which was freely used in earlier writings and maps<sup>5</sup> in the context of Igala and Idoma has fallen into disfavour and appears to survive as Kwoto or Koto: indeed, it has been pointed out that the name 'Koto' itself is a corruption of the word Akpoto — a word meaning the combination of Idoma, Igala and Igbirra.

Thirdly, there is also the problem that the population over much of the confluence area has been very mixed. Several linguistic groups co-exist without clear cut territorial boundaries and some of these even within the same settlements as at Koton Karifi. In the present Kogi division of Kwara State, the core of the confluence area, about ten different languages are assumed to be native to the area. Underlying the phenomenon of the mixed populations is the complex feature of population movements which have promoted it. Some of these migrations, like those of the Kupa, Bassa Nge and Igbirra Tao are recollected in oral accounts: others can be reconstructed from the study of the languages of the confluence area. But even where oral accounts are offered, events may be chronologically misplaced.

### **Pre- and Proto-Historic antecedents**

Even though recovery of earlier Stone Age artefacts have been made, the inadequate study of them does not permit us to say much more than that the stone implements assigned to the Sangoan assemblage as authenticated from the zone extending from the Keffi-Nassarawa-Izom westwards to the Jebba and further upstreams by Soper, Davies and Shaw, indicate that man might have lived in this area as far back as some forty thousand years ago.<sup>7</sup> Other Middle Stone Age assemblages from the confluence

4. On the Tiv, see Bohannon, L. and Paul, 1953 *The Tiv of Central Nigeria* (London, I.A. Inst.)

5. For a concise 19th Century account of these names and those who prefer which version in Baikie, W.B. 1856 *Narrative of an exploring voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue in 1854* (London) Appendix D. On pp. 425-449. Armstrong 1955 . . . The Idoma . . . in Forde, 1955 pp. 91-92.

6. Isa Koto, L.S. 1970 *The natural environment and economic activities of Koton Karifi* (B.A. Hons dissertation/A.B.U. Zaria) p. 8.

7. For a discussion of the Stone Age industries in the area covered by this paper see Davis, O. 1957 *The Old Stone Age between the Volta and the Niger* (Bull. I.F.A.N. Dakar, Vol. 19 ser. B. pp. 592-616) Soper, R.S. (1965) *The Old Stone Age in Northern Nigeria* (Journ. Hist. Soc. Nigeria. Vol. III No. 2 pp. 175-194). The data from these sources are discussed and synthesised in Shaw, C.T. 1971 *The Pre-History of West Africa* pp. 33-77 in Ajayi, J.F.A. & Crowder (eds.) *History of West Africa* (Longman, London). Collections from this region are deposited in the Departments of Archaeology, University of Ibadan and Ghana, and archaeological work in progress on behalf of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria will shed more light on the stone age record of the area.

area have not been recovered to be studied in such a way as to clarify the cultural pattern of this period. No comprehensive studies have been made of the later Stone Age which featured the manufacture of microliths and terminated with the art of polishing stone implements and saw the introduction of pottery. Various facets of evidence are however present, and we have reason for assuming that the area was not inhabited before the Iron or the Metal Age.<sup>8</sup>

The Niger-Benue confluence area leaps into prominence when we enter the Metal Age—the period going back some three millennia or more before the present. This dominance is deduced from the archaeological discoveries which have today been resolved into the Nok 'culture'—a well-authenticated prehistoric culture of the whole central Nigerian area. In the present state of publicized knowledge of Nok culture, the most important feature for the historian are facts that actual evidence of metal working in the form of smelting furnaces, iron slag, manufactures in iron and tin have been revealed, some from controlled excavations (as at Taruga), and radio-carbon-dated to the period between 1,000 B.C. and A.D. 200, with most of them clustering within the period 500-200 B.C.<sup>9</sup> Related to the metal-working tradition is the evidence of the associated clay figurines depicting tools, bodily ornaments, postures, hair styles, some idea of disease, activities like the carrying of things on the head, besides their intrinsic value as works of art. The evidence of the exploitation of the oil-palm tree and of the oil-bearing *atili* is similarly preserved.<sup>10</sup> These finds have been recovered from one dozen or more sites extending from the eponymous village of Nok, and Kafanchan, Jema'a and Ankiring in the north-east to Kagara in the north-east,<sup>11</sup> This area, lying mostly north of the Niger-Benue overlaps with the area under consideration here; showing that the confluence area is part of the homeland of Nok culture as at present described and understood.

Of parallel significance for the area under study are the tentative conclusions from the study of languages, particularly those branches of the subject like genetic classifications, dialectology and glottochronology in which historical time is a factor. Generally speaking, those who have offered clues from the study of languages to historical, and especially prehistoric problems have exercised great caution and expressed reservations.<sup>12</sup> In the 19th century, Crowther, Schon, Koelle and Baikie attempted classifications of languages of the confluence area, and pointed out the close relationships between such languages as Igala and Yoruba or Bassa Nge and

8. Fagg, B.E.B. *Recent work in West Africa: New light on the Nok Culture*. (World Archaeology Vol. 1, No. 1, 1969 pp. 41-50), and a summary of the radio carbon chronologies see Shaw, C.T. *Radio-carbon dating in Nigeria* (J. of Hist. Soc. Nig. Vol. IV No. 3 1968 and Willett, F. *A survey of recent results in the radio carbon chronology of Western and Northern Africa* (J.A.H.) Vol. XII No. 3 1971 pp. 339-370.

9. Fagg, B.E.B. *The Nok Culture in prehistory* (J. Hist. Soc. Vol. 1, No. 4 1959 pp. 288-293).

10. See Willett, F. 1967 *Life in the History of West African Sculpture* (Thomas and Hudson) pp. 110-118.

11. *Ibid.* map, p. 15.

12. Armstrong, R.G. 1964 *The use of linguistic and ethnographic data in the study of Idoma and Yoruba* in Vansina, J. et al (eds.) *The Historian in Tropical Africa* (o.U.P.) pp. 127-139.

Nupe.<sup>13</sup> Greenberg's all-embracing classifications of the languages of Africa resolve the languages spoken around the Niger-Benue confluence namely the Yoruba (dialects), Igala, Agatu, Gade, Idoma (and dialects), Igbirra, Gbari (Gwari), Nupe (and dialects) into three clusters of the Kwa group, placing Koro, Afo and Tiv in two sub-sections of the Benue-Congo group.<sup>14</sup> The classification by Greenberg, taken with the local refinements by Armstrong and other inferences permit some rewarding soundings into the pre- and proto-history of the area. Ballard's examination of the linguistic geography of the Nigerian Middle Belt considered with oral traditions of the peoples has thrown light on the questions of source areas of the movement of language groups (and their speakers) and the pattern of migrations.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Igbirra of the Okene area, today the most numerous, migrated from the north side of the confluence; the Tiv indeed would have had their ancient homeland in the Obudu plateau. Also migrations of Gbari, deduced to be towards the north and east, post-date the settlements of Koro and of speakers of Greenberg's Plateau languages.<sup>16</sup> One of the most spectacular inferences from the linguistic geography of the central Nigerian area is the speculation that the 'middle Benue' is the most probable area of Bantu origin.<sup>17</sup>

What then are the main themes in the pre- and proto-history of the confluence and adjacent areas of Nigeria that we can glean from archaeological, linguistic and contemporary cultural sources? These are, that before the last centuries B.C. a metal-using society or societies inhabited the area. The other surviving aspects of their culture indicate that they could have been agriculturists; they exploited the oil-palm tree, they made clay figurines depicting aspects of their culture.<sup>18</sup> Oral information is silent on the Nok culture obviously because it is too ancient and general to persist specifically in human memory. However, some cultural practices, like the hair-styles, bodily decorations, the wearing of lip and ear plugs and of bells and other features have been identified with groups like the Numana, Jaba and others who inhabit the Jos plateau and adjacent area of central Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> On a few points, history and proto-history tend to overlap. Traditions of the Nassarawa area indicate that a population identified as the Nambias and also the Koro are aboriginal to the area and Sciortino speculates an identity of the ancient Nambias with the present Numana.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the particular excellence and the importance of the iron working of the Gade

13. For a study of these earlier efforts see, Hair, P.E.H. *The early Study of Nigerian Languages* (Cambridge University Press 1967) but the major nineteenth century work on the area is Koelle, S. 1854 *Polyglotta Africana* (London) (1963 reprint).

14. Greenberg, J. *The languages of Africa* (Indiana 1966).

15. Ballard, J. *Historical inferences from the Linguistic Geography of the Nigerian Middle Belt* (Africa Vol. XLI No. 4 1971 pp. 294-305).

16. *Ibid.* p. 299.

17. The question of the ultimate source area of the Bantu has recently been discussed with a tendency to uphold Guthrie's location of this in the Luba-Lunda area between the Congo and Zambesi but Greenberg's suggestion of the middle Benue is re-affirmed in Greenberg, J. *Linguistic evidence regarding Bantu origins* (J. Afr. Hist. Vol. XIII No. 2 1972 pp. 189-216).

18. Fagg, op. cit. p. 289.

19. *Ibid.* pp. 292-3.

20. Sciortino, J.C. *Notes on Nasarawa Province* 1919 p. 5.

and the Koro has been mentioned — but what these owe to the two or three millenia old tradition of metal working in the area is yet to be defined.<sup>21</sup>

Although the smaller groups especially to the north-east of the confluence area represent, in today's cultural assumptions, one of the more 'backward' areas of Nigeria, the archaeological and linguistic evidence do converge in giving them a significant place in the prehistory and proto-history of the cultures of the urbanized and more numerous polities of the Edo, Yoruba and Igbo to the south of the region. If indeed the Yoruba, Igala, Idoma, the Bini-Urhobo-Ishan, etc., Igbo, Nupe-Gbari-Kakanda, Igbirra-Gade clusters and subgroups are as close as genetic classifications and lexicostatistics indicate, the suggestion might be put that the homeland(s) of the proto-language(s) should be located in the area where these languages share common frontiers. These would approximately be in the confluence area. For a language like Yoruba, the higher degree of internal differentiation is to be found among those dialects closest to the confluence. Taken with other evidence, it would appear that the ultimate origins of the Yoruba-speaking peoples, are to be located not very far from the Niger-Benue confluence area. Furthermore, the demonstrated antiquity of metal working traditions of the Nok culture and the more direct relationships of its clay sculptural tradition with the art of classical Ife (now being placed by carbon 14 dates between the 9th and 13th centuries A.D.)<sup>22</sup> as well as the overall affinities with Yoruba, Edo and Igbo art propose the confluence area as a significant source area of cultural influence. This observation is based in part on its overlap with the area so far included on the real-map of the Nok culture and the fact that it is the intervening belt between the Nok area and these larger cultural units further south. These tentative correlations would no doubt be modified as research progresses, and even if these internal relationships are imprecise at present, they seem to make sense, and to hang together as prehistoric antecedents for the later period.

### The Historical Period

The historical period ranges over several centuries for the societies of the confluence area. The name 'Kwararafa' and Nupe are cited in chronicles of the Hausa kingdoms referring to events placed in 14th or 15th century contexts.<sup>23</sup> A polity which has been identified with Idah area of Igala is also mentioned in Benin dynastic history relating to the 15th and 16th centuries. In spite of these references, it is not until the 18th, and especially the 19th centuries that the peoples of the confluence area enter the non-controversial realism of written history.

The more conspicuous entities in the Niger-Benue confluence area are the Nupe, Igala, Tiv, Idoma and Igbirra. Because of their own dynastic accounts, the Igala and Nupe kingdoms offer us historical evidence over a longer time-span: these two groups together with the much talked about (but rather elusive) Kwararafa empire have exercised dominant influence in the area, especially in pre-1800 history. There are formal accounts relating to the emergence of the kingdoms of Igala and of Nupe, and

21. Tempoe O. & C.L. 1919 Notes . . . on the Gade pp. 108-9 and Koro pp. 238-242.

22. Willett, *op. cit.* pp. 365-367.

23. Notably in *The Kano Chronicle*: trans. by Palmer, H.R. *Sudanese Memoirs* Lagos, 1928 Vol. III pp. 106-109.



on the basis of their kinglists, dates have been suggested for the foundations of these kingdoms. Geographical location has contributed a great deal to the prominence of the Igala and the Nupe states. The Igala, before the 19th century inhabited the entire triangular tract of territory on the left bank of the Benue and Niger about 100 kilometers above and below their confluence. Settlements of the Igala-speaking peoples were also located on the right bank of the Niger below the confluence, opposite Etobe. Similarly, the Nupe-speaking peoples are located mainly around the confluence of the Kaduna and Gbako rivers with the Niger above and below the Niger-Kaduna confluence. The Nupe kingdom had served as a core area for a process of acculturation and political domination of various sub-sections of Nupe and of initial outsiders like the Kupa, Ihabe or Kakanda; and some Yoruba-speaking peoples. The dynasties of the Igbirra kingdoms of Panda and Igu, the rulers of the Alago kingdom of Doma, Attama and Eze of the Nsukka area in north-west Igboland on the border of the Igala, as well as the Oku of Ikiri in north-east Yorubaland claim either that their founding ancestors came from Idah or derive the legitimacy of their offices from the Atta of Igala. Dynasties apart, the clans of the Igbirra Tao (Okene area), the Osomari Igbo south of Onitsha, some clans of the Idoma and Agatu claim migrations from Igala territory. Thus, the histories of the Nupe and Igala (and indirectly of Kwararafa (Jukun)) provide a general framework for the history of the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area.

One initial problem in sketching the history of the Igala state in its early period is that of chronology. The kinglist features a continuity which would make us believe that the Atta Ayagba (Ayegba) or the final Atta represented by an Ayagba 'phase' in the traditions belongs to the 17th century.<sup>24</sup> This date for Ayagba would make the Igala account of a historical war for independence from the 'Onu Apa' (Aku of the Jukuns) more plausible, a struggle in which the part of "an itinerant Muslim preacher" makes chronological sense.<sup>25</sup> It is obvious, however, that the names of some of the Igala kings must have been forgotten, other than the two or three who are sometimes omitted because they "died without issues". Crowther was informed in 1854 at Idah that the reigning Atta was the twentieth, implying that the present (1970) Atta should be the thirty-first and not the twenty-fifth or even the twenty-eighth on the stretched list.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the kinglist which exists does not contain the names of all the Attas and as such it only represents a shortened chronology for the kingdom.

Evidence other than that based on the kinglist would, however, push the establishment of the Igala state as a recognizable political entity to a much earlier period. Benin traditional history preserves information on the relations of the Obas Ozolua and Esigie with "Atta of Idah". It is also claimed that "the first Atta was a Benin prince who had been sent to Idah as chief by a former Oba". Leaving for the moment the real nature of Idah-Benin relations, it would appear at least that a relatively powerful state had come into existence in the homeland of the Igala by the late 15th and early 16th centuries. An archaeological excavation at the mound called *Ojuwo*

24. Clifford *op. cit.* p. 397.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 399.

26. Crowther, S.A. *Journal of an expedition up the Niger and Tshadda . . . in 1854* (London 1855) p. 173.

27. Egharevba, J.U. 1935 *A short history of Benin* (1968 reprint) Ibadan p. 28.



*Atogu* or *Ateogwu* at Idah described by Shaw as neither "a midden nor accumulated occupation debris, but appears to be a collapsed structure of some kind",<sup>28</sup> has yielded radio-carbon dates of A.D. 1495  $\pm$  95 and A.D. 1540  $\pm$  95 which, with the overlap in the standard, could be assigned to the 15th or 16th century. The establishment of the Nupe kingdom under Tsoede from Idah is also placed towards the end of the 15th or early 16th century.<sup>29</sup> Much more staggering are the claims that the foundation of the Alago (Arago) kingdom of Doma on the right bank of the Benue above the territory of the Igala is attributed to migrations from Igala territory about A.D. 1232. All these suggestions point to one sinister truth—that "... the oral traditions seem to cover only a fraction of the total span of Igala history".<sup>30</sup> What is clear from the foregoing is that the history of Igala state is longer than the one presented by the existing dynastic record. If we place Ayagba in the 17th century, we have a minimum of two earlier centuries and a maximum of four (if we accept the Doma account as at present stated) not specifically spanned by direct oral evidence.

A recent systematic re-assessment of Igala oral traditions of dynastic origins in its own sociological and political context has improved our historical perspective. The traditions about the proto-dynastic kings, namely Abutu Eje, Agenapoje, Ebulejonu, Idoko and even of Ayagba are to be taken as representing "mythical archetypes of structural arrangements that must have taken a longer time to evolve than is suggested by the idea of associating events with single reigns".<sup>31</sup>

The major themes in the evolution of the Igala state are preserved in legend surrounding specific personalities. The legends appear to permit the arrangement of the events they describe in a progressive order. First is that dealing with the transfer of sovereignty from an aboriginal population—the (the Okpoto of some accounts) to a foreigner, usually identified as Abutu Eje—at times identified as a child reared by a leopard (*eje*), or as a prince from Ado(Benin), or Apa (Wukari Jukun), or Yorubaland, or as Agenapoje from heaven.<sup>32</sup> The next phase thus expressed in myth is the emergence of the Achadu, a foreigner from Igbo whose personal qualities led to his marriage to the female Atta and who became the patron (as ritual husband) of the Atta, and the leader of the traditional king-makers—the *Igala Mella*. Ayagba's father is the representative of the period when the Igala rejected a tribute-paying status, defeated a Jukun expedition and established the machinery of the traditional government which has survived until recent times.<sup>33</sup>

From this proto-dynastic framework extending over several centuries, we can reconstruct the early history of this state, which holds a key to the histories of the multi-lingual polities in the Niger-Benue confluence area. Boston has discussed the

28. Shaw, *op. cit.* p. 464.

29. Nadel, S.F. 1935 *The King's Hang-men: A judicial organisation in Central Nigeria*. (Man, XXXV, 143 p. 130) Nadel, 1942 pp. 72-76.

30. Boston *Oral Tradition and the History of Igala* (J. Afri. Hist. Vol. X No. 1 1969 pp. 29-43).

31. Boston, *Igala Kingdom*, p. 110.

32. One addition to these is that of a son of Queen Amina of Zaria; but this claim might be a recent edition based on the references to Amina and "Attagara" in the Hausa sources. See an Anonymous article 'The Rise and Fall of the Igala State', *Nigeria Magazine* No. 80 1964 pp. 17-29.

33. Boston, 1968, pp. 6-27.

sources from which the kingship of the Igala might have derived or would have been influenced.<sup>34</sup> "Behind the datable and better 'documented' Benin impact or the much more obscure but perhaps more recent and better remembered Jukun overrule, there is the evidence of a still older cultural connection with the Yoruba-speaking peoples".<sup>35</sup>

One convenient platform for the discussion of the relationships of the Igala with the Yoruba-speaking peoples is provided by the statement inspired chiefly by linguistic comparison that:

The most definite statement that can be made about the Igala is that they had a common origin with the Yoruba and that the separation took place long enough ago to allow for their fairly considerable linguistic differences.<sup>36</sup>

This statement is elaborated further by lexico-statistical returns of "a separation time of 2,000 years between Igala and Yoruba".<sup>37</sup> The Igala and the Yoruba are today territorially separated. The closest groups of Yoruba-speaking peoples to the Igala are the Oworo whose territory reached the Niger at Lokoja, one of the original settlements of the Oworo, the Abinu (Bunu), Ikiri, Owe, and Ijumu, all located inland on the right bank of the Niger above and below the confluence. These groups are today separated from the Igala by the riverain Bassa Nge (speaking a dialect of Nupe) and the more numerous Egbirra (Egbira, or Igbirra Tao) who came to the area perhaps as recently as the middle of the 18th century.<sup>38</sup> The Yoruba-speaking people especially the Ikiri, Abinu, Oworo, Ijumu, and Owe and East Yagba are geographically closer to the Igala and also preserve living culture traits and orally transmitted traditions which vividly demonstrate closer ties which, though of imprecise antiquity, are definitely more recent than that suggested from an Oyo-based linguistic comparison.<sup>39</sup>

It has been argued elsewhere from oral and other evidence that the territories of the Igala and the Yoruba-speaking peoples had once been contiguous.<sup>40</sup> Surviving features of such a period include the existence of settlements of Igala-speaking peoples on the right or west bank of the Niger such as Ajaokuta and Geregu. The ultimate extent of the area actually inhabited by the Igala on the west bank, prior to the coming of the Igbirra and Bassa Nge is open to conjecture but a community like the isolated Igala-speaking village of Ebu near Asaba presents an interesting case.<sup>41</sup> Owe and Ijumu traditions suggest that the area at present inhabited by the Igbirra Tao was the home of communities some of which like Igonyin (Egain) shared 'brotherly'

34. Boston, J. "Notes on the origin of Igala Kingship". (J.H. Soc. Nig. Vol. 2 No. 3 1962 pp. 373-383).

35. Boston, *Igala kingdom* pp. 7-8.

36. Armstrong, in Forde, (ed.) *Peoples of the . . .* 1955, p. 80.

37. Armstrong 1964 p. 132.

38. Ibrahim, *op. cit.* 16-17.

39. Obayemi, *Oral Evidence*, p. 12.

40. Obayemi *Ibid* pp. 12-13.

41. Fresco, E.M. *Two dialects of Igala and Yoruba: some comparisons* (Research Notes Inst. of Afr. Studies, Ibadan 1968 pp. 32-46 on the isolation of Ebu dialect from the main Igala community).

relations with them. It is evident that some Yoruba-speaking elements were Igbirralised through isolation from the main groups as indicated by proper personal names of Igbirra with clear Yoruba derivations.<sup>42</sup> The oral traditions of the Abinu (Bunu), even at the preliminary stage take suggestions a step further. It is asserted at Eesi (Eshi) and at Odo Ape and for Agbede, that the territory of the Eesi in earlier times did extend as far as the Oya (the River Niger) near Eda (IDah) and that the river Osara flows across what used to be Eesi land.<sup>43</sup> This information goes with other suggestions to point to a time when the territories of Igala and Abinu ('O-kun Yoruba) were unseparated except for the river.

Given a situation a few centuries ago in which the settlements of Igala and Yoruba-speaking populations were contiguous, the similarities between the Yoruba and Igala kingdoms on issues like succession as outlined by Boston become even more plausible. Although the north-east Yoruba states or 'statelets' differ from both the Igala and Yoruba kingdoms in the sense that they are not 'kingdoms', the political organization around which their society revolves offers us a first hand observation of a stage in Yoruba-Igala state formation.

Each 'state' (there are more than thirty among these groups) is headed by individuals who have risen to the ranks of the highest grades of titles prefixed either Oba- (Obaro, Obadofin, Obajemu, etc.) or Olu- or Ele- (Olu, Eleta, Oludoyin, Alaere, etc.) some of which in a few places are hereditary within certain lineages. The holders of these titles controlled lineages, each with a distinct territorial definition. Even where there is an *olu* (chief or 'king') holding one of these titles, the other title-holders of the *Oroota* and *Ol'oolu* grade exercise together with him what is best described as 'collective headship of state'. The total number of these Or'ootas vary but the more stable ones in each of these 'states' range between six and nine; usually shared by the three wards into which each state is normally divided. Where each category is centrally graded in order of seniority, rotational exercise of sovereignty was ensured by promotion as at Igbara (Iyara) and Adde. Where the titles are hereditary within the clan, rotational exercise of overall sovereignty was ensured by allowing the titles in a similar grade to remain vacant while the senior title-holder from another clan becomes the leader as at Ufe (Iffe). One interesting aspect of the history of these societies is that the traditions of origins for the people is the same as that of the rulers: there are no royal families. The supreme qualification for political leadership is that one is an indigene, descended from autochthonous elements. Slaves and other 'foreigners' were allowed another category of titles of which in some places the *Eleso* (Elesho) was at the apex. Where individual titles were hereditary within lineages, as at Ife-Olukotun, each title had specific functions.

The general similarity of these titles with those of the *Uzama* of Benin on the one hand, and the general relationship of the *Uzama* and *Oyo-Mesi* with similar institutions in Yorubaland on the other, have been pointed out.<sup>44</sup> It has been suggested that they refer to a pre-dynastic phase of political development.<sup>45</sup> Such too appears to

42. Ibrahim *op. cit.* 19

43. Abinu traditions recorded at Eesi Ape and Akpaa, Bunu District by the writer.

44. Obayemi *Oral Evidence*, p. 11 Bradbury, R.E., *The historical uses of comparative ethnography with special reference to Benin and the Yoruba* in Vansina (et al) 1964 p. 155.

45. Bradbury *op. cit.* p. 155.

have been the status of the Igala Mela in history. Like the six, seven or nine *Or'oota* of the Yoruba-speaking groups in Kabba and Yogi divisions described above, they all indicate a group which exercises collective authority. The system in which there are 'kings' without royal families, in which there were governments over which an Oba or an Atta might be imposed or allowed to rule over, as have survived among the Abinu, Owe, Ijumu, Ikiri, Oworo and Yagba represents the pre-dynastic antecedents of which the Uzama, the Oyo-Mesi, the Igala Mela and similar institutions are survivors.

For the Igala the conclusion from the above is that a political system might have emerged in which the supreme authority rested with the Igala Mela each of whom, like the Uzama, Nihinron, Oyo-Mesi or the *Or'oota* chiefs of the north-east Yoruba, had territories to administer. The real significance of the Igala Mela in the evolution of the Igala state is that they had formed a government with a defined territory located, in this case, in the Idah area. Later, a foreigner was received, under what circumstances is still not clear, and ruled over the 'moieties' of the Igala Mela. The personality involved could have been the one represented in legend as having descended miraculously from heaven, or the anonymous Igala chief who is said to have crossed the Niger from the west bank. With the Idah area as a 'core', the adjacent territory of the 'Okpoto' was incorporated under the over-rule of the Attas, like Ayagba and his successors to form the mega-state, namely the Igala kingdom as today understood. The Igala state might indeed have become a kingdom contemporaneously with the Edo and Yoruba kingdoms, but whenever it did mature, it had become strong enough to have engaged the attention of Benin and to have threatened the very existence of the latter in the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>46</sup>

While the above reconstruction offers a solution to the question of the emergence of the Igala kingdom there are other puzzles, on which the scheme is silent. The exact status of Amagedde on the Benue as a religious and/or political centre in the history of the Igala is not fixed. Every new Atta, in the third year of his reign, sends an official to Olutubatu, a grove near Amagedde to offer sacrifices on his behalf. Clifford reported further that

It is believed by many that this shrine marks the burial place of the pre-dynastic Attas . . . Moreover, it is generally accepted that Ayagba's father Idoko . . . died in the vicinity of Amagedde and that his body was brought down via the Benue and Niger to Idah, while there is the further very significant fact that during the funeral ritual—before the dead Atta is committed to his final rest—the Atebo (Head Priest) spends a period of seclusion in the royal grave-yard at Ajaina, taking with him a staff or 'Okute' known as 'Otutubatu', which may reasonably be supposed to represent the spirits of the ancestors whose remains are buried in the grove of this name at Amagedde.<sup>47</sup>

It can therefore be said that the first or one early 'centre' of the Igala kingdom was at Amagedde, some 150-miles above Idah on the Benue. However, the character of this

46. Egharevba *op. cit.* pp. 27-8.

47. Clifford, *op. cit.* p. 425 Boston cites traditions which confirm the above account, see Boston, *op. cit.*

capital and its dating will have to wait archaeological investigation. The change of capital from Amagedde to Idah, both of which are riverside settlements probably reflects a constitutional revolution marked either by a change of dynasty or the destruction of the earlier capital or the fusion of two systems hitherto centred on Amagedde and Idah. We do not even know if it had anything to do with a Jukun invasion or with a Nupe achievement of independence or statehood. Perhaps the Alago kingdom of Doma was established or began to pay tribute to the Atta when the capital was at Amagedde on the Benue, perhaps too, as a result of a military confrontation with Benin, an Edo-derived dynasty was indeed installed as the convergence in Igala and Benin sources suggest.<sup>48</sup>

Conceding the omission of six more names, perhaps we can date the foundation of the present dynasty, but not of the kingdom, to the 17th or late 16th century. It is also certain that things were not started from scratch but that there was a precedent to be derived from the memory of the Amagedde kings. The riverain orientation of the kingdom was no doubt a part of the scheme of things and the extension of the Atta's authority would no doubt have been partly dependent upon mobility on the river.<sup>49</sup>

The establishment of a Nupe kingdom is one of the important events associated with the Igala kingdom. This event, or rather, the most dramatic aspect of it is that which is centred around the personality of the Tsoede or Edegi who is said to have been fathered by an Igala king and a Nupe woman. After a period of residence at Idah his father died and he fled upstream from Idah with the essential insignia of office in a celebrated bronze canoe which was piloted by Kyedye (riverain Nupe) canoe-men. He arrived with them at the confluence of the Kaduna and Niger rivers where he established himself at Nupeko and from where he conquered the (pre-existing confederacy of the Bini Nupe).<sup>50</sup>

From the evidence available it appears fairly clear that the establishment of the Nupe kingdom was more gradual than the instant emergence proposed by the legends. Accepting the presence, since prehistoric times of people in the area under discussion, it is clear that centres of local authorities were emerging. In present day Nupeland, as among the 'O-kun' Yoruba, we still find an area or areas where the earliest form of political organization based on village autonomy survives. Such are the Nupe 'Zam' a group in the trans-Kaduna (Kutigi) area who, incidentally, are 'believed to be the oldest section of the Nupe'. Further back in time, such would have been the villages in the Benin area of Nupe, namely the twelve villages of Tafie, Bida, Doko, Esa, Nupeko, Eda, Towagi, Egbe, Ewu, Yesa, Gaba and Panjuru.<sup>51</sup> At one stage in history, they had evolved, each with an independent government under a 'town king'. It would appear that they formed a league, the Beni confederacy, in which Tafie enjoyed a type of seniority.<sup>52</sup> The sources make it clear that there were kings before

48. Boston 1962 (a) particularly pp. 378-383.

49. The titles Agaidoko, Abokko Onukwu Ata and Omogbaje were traditionally associated with the supervision of traffic on the Niger. (Boston *Igala Kingdom* p. 109 at seqq).

50. Dupigny, E.G.M. *Gazetteer of Nupe Province* (London 1920) p. 7, Nadel *A Black Byzantium* pp. 72-4.

51. Nadel, *Ibid.* p. 25 and Nadel, 1935 "Nupe state and Community" (Africa VIII).

52. Nadel, *A black Byzantium* . . . p. 24.



Tsoede's time some of which like Jegu, Jigba and others are specifically named.<sup>53</sup> Frobenius described three essential badges of office—a metal fillet called *Malfasing*, a stone sphere called *Rogo*, and a staff called *Tsukunsu* which "had been carried by Nupe emperors long before Edegi's time".<sup>54</sup> Thus as was probably the case with the Igala, the Beni villages and their kings did provide antecedents for what was to follow, namely the establishment of one central dynasty to rule over all these towns. That event is specifically attributed in the traditions to Tsoede who lived around Nupeko, a settlement at the confluence of the Kaduna with the Niger—a site that was later evacuated after some time "want of room".<sup>55</sup> The sources underline the idea that the period of Tsoede was revolutionary in the political history of the Nupe-speaking peoples. He had brought about the unification not only of the sedentary Nupe, represented by the Beni confederacy, but of the riverine Kyedye who "rule the water", and in a remarkable way had sealed the union by an effective ritual centred upon his personality. By establishing and maintaining a ritual presence along the Niger through the *ledu* villages where Tsoede's 'chains' and sculptural objects in bronze were deposited and by acquiring an army with a strong emphasis on cavalry, he was establishing an independent Nupe kingdom, which, freed from a plausible supremacy of the Igala,<sup>56</sup> became the core of one of the most powerful autochthonous states of the Nigerian area. Tsoede himself is believed to have flourished in the early part of the 16th century, but the references to the Nupe in Hausa sources date back to the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. Perhaps some of these refer to the Bini confederacy or the Nupe 'Zam', since, as we argued for the igala, a state or a group with a linguistic identity could and indeed did ante-date the dynasty.

The early development of the Igala kingdom under the Attas is largely unknown. What we can piece together from the dispersed evidence would therefore be very sketchy. One of Ayagba's sons, Onu is believed to have organized the fortifications of Idah and another son, Akumabi or Akogu is reputed to be a warrior who extended the frontiers of the kingdom.<sup>57</sup> One of the most definite things we can say about the pattern of internal development in the kingdom as a result of an intensive study of Igala traditional government, is the establishment of the royal lineages and the (prerogatives of royalty) allied recognition of the prerogatives of royal power which the Attas could exercise and which proved to be instrumental in extending royal influence in a number of ways. Settlements of the royal 'Igala?' clan were established all over the kingdom among the earlier 'kpoto' elements. Through the exercise of the prerogative of bestowing royal patronage by appointing title-holders, sometimes to supersede the earlier established, non-royal local authority the Attas upheld and furthered the influence and power of the royal lineages in combination of which the Atta was at the apex. The agencies which had operated for the expansion of the kingdom into initially non-Igala areas and of the extension of the authority and influence of the Atta of Idah may be summarized under the headings—military conquest, migration and colonization, religious influence and commerce.

53. Mason, M. *Nupe Kingdom* pp. 490-492.

54. Frobenius, L. *The Voice of Africa* Vol. II (London 1913) pp. 608-9.

55. Dupigny *Gazetteer of Nupe* p. 7.

56. Nadel *The King's Hangmen* . . . p. 130.

57. Clifford *op. cit.* 400 Boston *Igala Kingdom* p. 201.

It is very difficult to date the extension of Igala hegemony over the smaller groups along the river. Doma, with a longer kinglist than that preserved for the Igala kingdom, could have emerged at the time of the establishment of the dynasties of Igbirra Panda and of Igu are credited to one Ohibi, said to be an Igala prince who was sent first as a 'governor' into the area but who later asserted his independence.<sup>60</sup> So extensive was the Igala prestige that up to the middle of the 19th century the Kakanda (Ihabe) as well as the Kupa around Eggan on the right bank of the Niger above the confluence were still paying some tribute to the Atta at Idah.<sup>61</sup> The oral traditions referring to the foundations of Onitsha, Asaba and Agbor are linked in Igala accounts with the Igala while the Osomari Igbo, on the left of the Niger south of Onitsha, attribute the origin of their town to the Igala in the 18th century.<sup>62</sup> In the Igala hinterland both Igala and Igbo traditions agree as to the past authority of the Igala in the area as far south as Opi.<sup>63</sup> These traditions centre on the Igala warrior Onoja Oboni, who, based at Ogurugu, "raided the Igbo border country as far as the villages on the Nsukka escarpment and as far west as the Niger".<sup>64</sup> The Ezes of the Nsukka area were confirmed in office by the Achadu or the Atta. The more recent claims of the Ikiri, a north-east Yoruba group, that they copied the Igala forms of government and maintained relationships with Idah might be mentioned here.<sup>65</sup>

The character of the pre-jihad kingship of Nupe from its foundation is very imperfectly known today. Royal descent was apparently traced both patrilineally and matrilineally but the patrilineal descent was more important for eligibility to the throne.<sup>66</sup> The insignia of office included items cited above from Frobenius. There

58. Boston *Igala kingdom* p. 201.

59. Baikie, W.B. *Narrative of an exploring voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Benue in 1854* (London 1856) p. 112, Temple, *Notes on the Tribes* p. 26.

60. Ibid. p. 155 Clifford, *A Nigerian Chieftaindom* p. 398 identifies this Prince as Ohemu Eje. Ahmadu, E.D. (forthcoming) *Introduction to History of the Ebiras*. I am grateful to Mr. Ahmadu for showing me this work in manuscript.

61. Schon, J.F. and S.A. Crowther, *Journals of the Rev. James Frederick Schon and Mr. Samuel Crowther who with the Sanction of Her Majesty's Government accompanied the Expedition up the Niger in 1841 on behalf of the Church Missionary Society*. (Hatch & Son) 2nd ed. 1970 pp. 138, 145, 206 and p. 307.

62. Ijoma, E.A. (n.d.) *A short History of Osomari people* (Onitsha), pp. 6-8 Soc. Nig. Vol. II No. 1) pp. 53-54.

63. On the relations between the Igala and especially the north-west and western Igbo (Ibo) see Boston, J. "Notes on contact" . . . pp. 52-58 Ukpabi, S.C. *Nsukka before the establishment of the British Administration* (Research Note, 1971 Odu N.S. No. 6) pp. 101-110, Shelton, A.J. *The Igbo-Igala borderland: Religion and social control in Indigenous African colonialism* (Albany 1971) and Shaw, C.T. *Igbo Ukwu* . . . (Faber & Faber London 1970) Vol. I pp. 270-271.

64. Boston, J. 1962 (a) pp. 57-8, Shelton, *The Igbo-Igala borderland* pp. 20-24.

65. Although the earlier records by the British administrative officials are silent on Igala-Ikiri (administratively part of Bunu District) relations, the Ikiri Olu-ate of Akutukpa now give narratives in which Idah (Eda) was the place from which the sanctions of authority were derived. Such traditions are found in Braimah, S.A. *History of Kiri* (unp. Ms 1959) and were narrated to me in August 1970 at Akutukpa, Bunu District.

66. Mason, M. *The Nupe Kingdom* p. 13.

was, apparently, a preference for the white cloth (colour) by the *Etsu* or king, while some deities and cults like those of Ketsa near Jebba or the Ndako Gboya received official patronage.<sup>67</sup> Another interesting feature of the pre-jihad Nupe is the number of places which served as the seat of the *Etsus* at various times. Nupeko, Gbara, Mokwa, Jima, and probably others had functioned as capitals.<sup>68</sup>

More important was the question of the relationships of the Nupe state with the surrounding peoples and polities. The transformation of the Bini confederacy into a nucleus for a Nupe kingdom, the event attributed to Tsoede, was accompanied by many interesting developments. One of these is the inclusion of the Kyede and of the Gbedegi, otherwise separate 'tribes' in the mega-state, thereby serving as precedents and paving the way for the incorporation of the other 'tribes' and peoples either by conquest or by acculturation into the Nupe system. Some sources indicate that Nupe militarism ante-dated Tsoede.<sup>69</sup> The sources also portray Tsoede as a warrior king who waged "big and victorious wars" against neighbouring peoples.<sup>70</sup> While it is apparent that some of the conquests attributed to Tsoede, like those of the Yagba, Bunu and Kukuruku (Akoko-Edo) south of Nupeland were 19th century events telescoped back to the culture hero Tsoede, it is fairly established that Tsoede died at Gbagede in Kamberi territory on a military expedition, indirectly an initial territorial expansion northwards.<sup>71</sup>

More substantial are the traditions of the surrounding peoples concerning Nupe militarism in the period before 1800. Recorded oral histories of the old-Yoruba show a pre-occupation of the earlier Alafins with Bariba and Nupe states, to the north and north-east respectively. These traditions of relationships with the Tapa (pronounced 'Takpa'—the Yoruba name for the Nupe) which feature in memories of the reigns of Alafins like Oranmiyan (Oranyan), Sango and Ajuan (alias Ajaka), are martial.<sup>72</sup> The traditions of hostility had a decisive enough influence in the course of the history of the Alafins when an invading army of the Nupe, apparently with the support of

67. Crowther, S. *The Gospel on the Banks of Niger* . . . (London 1859) p. 117. Mason, M. *op. cit.* pp. 18-20.

68. The king lists in Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe* p. 8 permit a clear identification of Nupeko, Gbara, Mokwa and Jima as one-time capitals. It is difficult to speculate further on Kutigi, Kpada, and Tsolugi. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium* p. 76 also cites *Etsu*, Jengi and Yeti as temporary residents of the *Etsus* (Kings) of Nupe. One wonders however whether the internal rivalries which often led to territorial separation on the part of rival *Etsu* could not have been the causes of there being so many "capitals"—some of which were occupied for one reign only. Occupation of such "capitals" would have overlapped chronologically with others and this is perhaps one valid point for the observation that there could have been more than one Nupe state even in 'post-Tsoede' Nupe i.e. the assumption that 'unknown Nupe kings ruled over undefined spheres before the eighteenth century' Mason, *The Nupe Kingdom* pp. 34-5.

69. Mason, M. *op. cit.* citing traditions in Appendix 1 p. 491.

70. Nadel, S.F. *A Black Byzantium*, p. 74.

71. The stirrups of Tsoede are said to be preserved here Nadel *op. cit.* p. 76.

72. Johnson, Rev. S. *The History of the Yorubas* (Lagos 1921) pp. 10-11, 149-152. Ojo, Chief S. (Bada of Shaki) (n.d.) *Iwe Itan Oyo, Ikoyi ati Afijio* although Ojo has Johnson to guide his work sometimes gives additional details.

some of the Alafins' subjects, succeeded in entering Old Oyo, forcing the Alafin Onigbogi into exile. The Nupe offensive was kept up against the Alafins in exile and Old Oyo was not re-occupied until the reign of the Alafin Abipa, the fourth after Onigbogi.<sup>73</sup> Although our Nupe sources are less comprehensively informative on this important period of Nupe militarism, the observation has been made that the three kings who reigned immediately after Tsoede are reputed to have been buried at Mokwa,<sup>74</sup> which could have functioned as a centre of power after Tsoede. This later information would make the Etsus Shaba (if it was a personal name<sup>75</sup>), Zugunla and Moma Wari the more likely candidates for the offensive against Old Oyo. Smith has suggested the dates c. 1535-c. 1610 for this period.<sup>76</sup> The tradition of the successful repulse of the Nupe by the Alafins' forces, if it did coincide with the change of capitals from Mokwa to Jima, further east and deeper into the heart of Nupeland could possibly be interpreted as indicating a change in the orientation of Nupe militarism.<sup>77</sup>

The traditions of the Igbomina and Ibolo mention numerous encounters with the Tapa and it is not uncommon to find two or more lineages among the Igbomina and Ibolo preserving memories of their Tapa ancestry in their *oriki* and lineage rituals.<sup>78</sup> The oral accounts of other Yoruba towns speak of Nupe invasions as those for Ede of Ilesa, the seat of the Owa who is the principal Oba or king of the Ijesa. One of the difficulties of accepting the narratives of the military confrontations of this period as historical facts is the crucial issue of identity. One wonders whether events attributed to the 'Tapa' in some accounts do not in fact refer to the Oyo and not the Nupe and vice versa.

The Ijesa, for example, narrate that during the reign at Ilesa of the female Owa Waye or yeye Waye the 'Tapa' were said to have attacked Ilesa twice. Similarly, during the time of another female Owa Ori or Yeye Wari the 'Tapa' again came with formidable cavalry forces and they were only repulsed by a stratagem in which palm kernels were sprayed across a platform of slippery bamboo stalks which made the horses slip and fall.<sup>79</sup> While our Nupe sources are silent on such an episode, we do have an Oyo tradition which says that the Alafin Obalokun sent an expedition into the Ijesa country but that the attacking forces were ambushed and defeated—the Oyo being then unaccustomed to bush-fighting.<sup>80</sup> The Owa Ori probably reigned during the second half of the 17th century—a contemporary of Obalokun. The 'Tapa' could

73. Johnson, S. *Op. cit.* pp. 161-167.

74. See the king lists in Dupigny *Gazetteer of Nupe* p. 7. Nadel, 1942 p. 76.

75. In recent times Shaba is a designation of the next in rank to the Etsu and this title is widely used as such by the Oworo, Akoko, and Yagba who were among those who were strongly subjected to Nupe influence in the nineteenth century.

76. Smith, R.S. 'The Alafin-in Exile' p. 74. See also Smith, R.S. *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (Methuen, London 1969).

77. Smith, *op. cit.* p. 69 Dupigny *Gazetteer of Nupe*, p. 7.

78. This is illustrated for the Ibolo in Kolawole's dissertation on the Ibolo of Oyo Division, Kwara State presented for the degree of B.A. Honours, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, 1972.

79. Abiola, J.D.E. (et al) *Itan Ijesa-Obokun, Ile Owuro* (Lagos 1932) pp. 44-5, to 47-8.

80. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*.



well refer to a 'northern' (from the Ilesa point of view) force, and the Oyo cavalry could well have included Tapa (Nupe) and other northerners like Hausa and Bariba.<sup>81</sup>

The great victory described in Benin traditions over a northern power which is now thought to be Oyo and to have occurred during the reign of Oba Ehengbuda (c. 1578-1606)<sup>82</sup> could well refer, not to the Oyo but to the Nupe. If indeed the period of the withdrawal of the Alafin from Oyo Ile (Old Oyo) in the face of Nupe supremacy as tentatively worked out is reliable,<sup>83</sup> the Oyo would be the less likely invaders of Benin.

There is little doubt that Nupe was a power of prime importance in the military politics of the Niger valley during the 16th and 17th centuries. The source of its power, in sharp contrast to those of the kingdoms further east like Doma, Igala and Biepi (Kwararafa) which exercised great influence of a religious nature, was military. Nupe is also unique in that a fairly comprehensive account of the last century before the upheavals brought about by the jihad is quite possible.<sup>84</sup> The Etsu Jibrilu (about 1750) had achieved fame partly because of his religious policy as a muslim king, but he appeared to have faced a serious rebellion which forced him to take refuge in Kutigi. The reign of Jibrilu did, apparently, coincide with an expansion in trade between the coast and Hausaland via Nupeland—muskets being probably among the traded commodities. The Etsu Mu'azu temporarily succeeded the deposed Jibrilu, but was himself forced out to Yauri after an eight-year reign. Jiya who expelled Mu'azu was well-known as a warrior and one who had a good hold on the kingdom. Jiya had one successor or two (Samaza and Ilyasa) before the successful come-back of Mu'azu. The latter exchanged gifts of slaves and cowries for horses and female slaves with the ruler of the Hausa state of Gobir. It was during his reign that an invading Oyo army was defeated with great losses for the Oyo in c. 1790. The circumstances of this war appears to be an attempt by the Alafin of Oyo either to renounce an overlordship which the Nupe could have exercised over the Oyo at an unknown date (if the tribute referred to in contemporary European accounts implies subjection of one kingdom to another), or to challenge a menacing northern neighbour. Like Jiya, Mu'azu appeared to have had an effective control of his domains, but he was perhaps the last Etsu of the Tsoede line to hold all of Nupe together in an effective way. Kolo, his son and successor, was deposed and he fled to Zugurma in western-most Nupeland which then seceded from the rest of Nupeland. In the rivalries between Jimada and Majia which followed, the Fulani were invited—an event which extended the jihad of Usman dan Fodio into Nupeland.

One of the outstanding themes in the history of the Nupe, is the forging of a nation out of fairly heterogeneous though contiguous groups. The results of the interaction of

81. On this confusion of identity we can cite tendency for Yoruba to refer to all 'northerners'—Hausa, Kanuri, Gwari etc. as Gambari or the Igala and Idoma to use the term *Abakpa* for 'northerners' or muslims in general. Names like Woruda, Sokia etc. cited in Oyo military traditions reflect this northern factor.

82. Ryder, A.F.C. *A reconsideration of Ife-Benin relations* J.A.H. 1965. Vol. VI No. 1 pp. 25-37.

83. Smith, R.S. *op. cit* passim suggests that Oyo Ile was abandoned about 1535 and was not re-occupied till about 1610: the Nupe rather than the Oyo would have been the invading power in the events dateable if approximately to the sixteenth century.

84. The information for this session comes from *Mason: The Nupe Kingdom* Chapter II.



military conquest and acculturation in the promotion of the influence and power of the Nupe kingdom in the tradition of Tsoede, in which the Beni Nupe are at the core, had been the emergence of a recognizable culture group which, with some internal variations in the area now covered by Nupe or some Nupe-ized peoples, may be described as the Nupe culture. It was a process in which the distribution of the 'mythical charter around the personality of Tsoede and all the boundaries of the kingdom within Nupeland gradually came to coincide.<sup>85</sup>

Of crucial importance to the Igala and Nupe states is the presence of the River Niger and its great tributaries, the Benue and the Kaduna. The two states exercised sovereignty over sections of the river, but the actual control was delegated to titled officials. In order to place the Nupe and the Igala political, economic, cultural and social relations with the other peoples and states in the Nigerian area, we must emphasize the riverain orientation of these states. Nadel provides a summary for the Nupe which we can substantially apply to the Igala, with the substitution of corresponding Igala names:

The river Niger, *ndaduma*, as the Nupe call it, 'Farther Niger' marks the path of the mythical Tsoede where he set out to unite the Nupe into a powerful kingdom. Even later, in historical times when the Nupe states extended far across central Nigeria, the capital always remained near the river—Gbara, Jima, Mokwa and Raba. But also economically the Niger was the life centre of the country. The welfare of a large section of the population depended on the river. And traffic and trade were bound up with the Niger. What appears, then, in the context of myth as the path of the ancestor—king of Nupe, plays in the actual tribal life the role of a 'king's highway', of a vital artery of the political and economic organism over which the king extends his own special, sacred authority."<sup>86</sup>

One other power which casts its long shadow across the confluence area is that of the Apa, Wapan or Jukun. No consideration of the history of the Niger-Benue confluence area can ignore the role, presumed or actual, of a Jukun 'empire'. The Idoma, Igbirra and Igala often describe themselves as being related to the Jukun, and are sometimes jointly referred to as 'Apa people'. Although the outline of Jukun history is not a subject of this paper, aspects of Jukun influence call for attention here. One recent reassessment of the Jukun history based primarily on artistic traditions suggests a mid-18th century date for the coming of the Jukun into the Wukari area following the partial evacuation of Biepi in 1792, a walled town 100 km. north-east of Wukari. We do not know for how long the contacts between the Jukun and the Idoma (and Alago), the Jukun and the Igala and probably also the Jukun and the Igbirra lasted. But the movements of the Aku first into the Wukari area, then north of the Benue from c. 1750 to c. 1820 before the re-establishment at Wukari brought the Aku physically in

85. Nadel, (a) Nupe State and community (Africa 1935) Vol. VIII No. 3, p. 261.

86. Nadel, S.F. (b) *The king's Hangmen* . . . p. 131.

87. Rubin, A. *The Arts or the Fokun?*

contact with the confluence peoples. The large kingdom of Keana (but not the older kingdom of Doma) was more directly related to the Jukun. The authority of the even more demonstrably "dependent" peoples was apparently more religious than anything else, and 'tribute' payment was more of voluntary donation.<sup>88</sup>

Whether the mid-18th movements of the Jukun led to displacements and subsequent migrations of other groups is not clear. The Kakanda (Ihabe), the Igbirra and the Idoma mention migrations from 'Apa' territory in their histories, and though not yet clearly demonstrated in those cases, one important theme in the history of the Niger-Benue confluence area, is migration. The more important groups whose migrations have brought revolutionary genealogies which go back some fifteen to eighteen generations of remembered ancestors place the ultimate homelands of the Tiv in the Obudu hills area.<sup>89</sup> The Tiv expansions which brought with them a continuous readjustment of frontiers between them and surrounding peoples like the Idoma had also seen the survival of the Idoma group, Etulo (Utuur), who inhabit the Katsina Ala area.<sup>90</sup> It had also brought sections of the Tiv into contact with the Jukun, whose spiritual influence on the Tiv has been profound. The Igbirra of the Okene area appear to have begun their secondary expansion from the Igbirra Kpete area and, over the years displaced groups of Bassa (Nge?), northern Edo and possibly some Yoruba-speaking elements.<sup>91</sup>

Of the individual histories of peoples like the Idoma, Alago and Afo before about 1800, we are faced with the handicap that we can in the present state of available information make only a few general statements. Linguistic and other evidence suggest that the Idoma-speaking peoples had been resident in the present area and further to the east for several millenia. They operated the system of government based on 'clans' or 'lands' — a form which is identical with those described for the north-east Yoruba in which there were kings, a hierarchy of title-holders but all of which were independent of each other and of any outside power except for those who paid 'tribute' to the Atta at Idah and to the Aku at Biepi (Kororofa) and later at Wukari. There are references in Idoma oral histories to the 'Horse War' which seem to be too early to be identified with the jihad-inspired upheavals of the 19th century — but which could refer to offshoots of the Chamba raids beginning in the upper Benue. This 'Horse War' together with the expansion of the Tiv led to displacements of Idoma from earlier settlements of which the present settlement pattern is an adjustment. The Alago kingdom of Keana appears to be an offshoot of Doma and it appears that this was a response to the discovery and processing of salt from the salt lake at Keana. The attachment of Keana to the Jukun receives greater emphasis than that of Doma to the Jukun but both acknowledge relations with the Jukun ruling dynasty.

88. Bohannon, Laura, 'A genealogical Charter.' (Africa 1952) Vol. XXII, No. 4 p. 301.

89. Armstrong 1955 pp. 134-5.

90. Ibrahim *The Search for Leadership* p. 18 citing Koelle's informant (1852/3) identifies the Bassa Komo as the inhabitants of the Okeneba area. In the light of other circumstantial evidence however, these might have been Bassa Nge.

91. *Ibid.* citing Koelle's informants (1852/3) identifies the Bassa Kano as the inhabitants of the Okenaba area. In the light of other circumstantial evidence however, these might have been Bassa Nge.

## Conclusion

Looking at the various groups dealt with in this paper, it is impressive to see how much borrowing took place and how much the groups had in common in spite of differences in languages and political organization. A particular examination of the material culture and religious institutions of the Nupe, Igala, Edo, Igbo and Yoruba on the one hand, and of the Jukun, Idoma, Igala, Igbirra and the north-east Yoruba on the other indicate these complex patterns of pre-jihad interactions, much of which have not been studied. For the former grouping, one concrete line of evidence is made up of the various objects of brass or bronze, found at intervals in the Niger valley and the intervening areas between the urban centres, namely, the Tada and jebba bronze figures, and the Ejubejailo pectoral mask in the possession of the Atta at Idah which are understood to have been of Ife and Benin manufacture as mentioned above.<sup>92</sup>

The Igala and the Igbo have preserved many cultural items which are identical for both groups. The institution of the Attama, a priest of Igala origin but well established in Igbo villages of the Nsukka region are well known. Other things found on either side of the language frontier include ceremonial iron gongs, the large drums (*okega*) and wooden figures *ikenga* (Igbo), *okega* (Igala) which symbolize individual fortune and achievement.<sup>93</sup> The list is much longer and these can also be seen to be shared with neighbouring groups on the right bank of the River Niger.

Also very attractive and striking is the impact of religions. Traditions indicate that Islam was seriously professed by the Etsu Nupe Jibirilu who reigned in the first half of the 18th century, but before and since the establishment of Islam, the traditional belief systems have cut across frontiers of languages and political systems. The masques and masquerades of the Nigerian area could be resolved into groups. Rubin has outlined those belonging to the Jukun system,<sup>94</sup> featuring the Aku, Maga and Akuma of the 'Wapa' section of the community and the Ashama, Agashi and Dodo masquerades of the nominally muslim Abakwariga. Close parallels and actual equivalents of some of these masquerades are known from the confluence area. The personnel behind the Egu-afia of the Igala, the Eku-oba of the Igbirra, and Alekwu of the Idoma and the Egun of the Yoruba-speaking Abinu and Oworo share many things.<sup>95</sup> The Igbirra *ovopa*, the Abinu *obakpa*, appear to be cognate with the Jukun *Abakwa*, which somehow is the Idoma name for a muslim, or a Hausa. The Ekwe

92. These statements are based on summaries from Fagg, W.B., *Nigerian Images* (Lond Humphries, London 1963), pp. 16, 27, PL 57 and Willett, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-173; Allison, P.K. Collecting for Nigeria's Museums, *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 77, 1963, p. 127; *Nigerian Daily Times*, No. 19, 094 of 18th October 1969, p. 13 as well as two masks located at Okedagba see Obayemi, 'Brass-working survivals among the north-east Yoruba' (forthcoming *savanna* (Zaria)).

93. Boston, J.S. 'Ceremonial iron gongs among the Ibo and the Igala'. (*Man*, 52, 1964), pp. 44-47. A notable example of the items of the religious culture which calls for attention in this area is the Ikenga (Igbo) Okegga (Igala)—the concept of a personal cult represented by wooden figures. This is also said to be found among Igbira and Idoma and some Edo, Fagg, W.B., *op. cit.*

94. Rubin, *op. cit.*, Chapter V, pp. 39-78; Meek, C.K. *Sudanese Kingdom*, pp. 139, ps. 19-23.

95. Boston, *Igala Kingdom*, p. 40.

masquerade, sometimes described as the principal Igala masquerade is traditionally said to have belonged to the Jukun.<sup>96</sup> The long masquerade, the *okula*, *ouna*, *iro* and *okponobi* of the Abinu, Oworo, Owe and of some Ijumu towns or the *Ewuna* of the Bassa Nge all derive from a common tradition.<sup>97</sup>

In the area of ancestor personification, the Igbirra (Ebira) have a certain pre-eminence as founders of a cycle of these masquerades. The Igbira (Egbira) are mentioned as having introduced some of the masquerades to the Abinu and Oworo, while the priests to some of these masquerades orders have the clan name *Adoga*, a name found among Idoma speaking peoples.<sup>98</sup> The powerful women's cult *Ofosi* or *Ohosi* of the Abinu, Ikiri, Oworo, Owe, and some Ijumu towns are all said to derive from Olle in Bunu, the founder being a man who come from the Igala-Idoma side of the Niger some centuries ago. The language of this cult is not locally intelligible. The importance of the intermediary position of the Igbirra groups is further marked in the case of the Igala by the fact that the clans performing the *ilo* (*iro* among the north-east Yoruba) in the Atta's burials are the clans of Ohimogbo and Uchada who with the Ohiuga (chief diviner) are ultimately of Igbirra origin.<sup>99</sup> Also, some Nupe masquerades were said to have been copied by the Yoruba of Oyo during the reign of the Alafin Ofinran—in the seventeenth century. The Alapini, one of the Oyo Mesi who is in charge, echoes the Nupe title Lakpene.<sup>100</sup> The Tiv have borrowed some of the cults of the Jukun like the 'Akume' while in recent years, some Tiv chiefs and head of kindred had gone to Wukari or Katsina Ala to obtain certain Jukun instruction in magic.<sup>101</sup>

The economic interrelations of the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence area is discussed elsewhere, but some of its salient points will be mentioned here. Brass-working has been very important in the area from time immemorial—the Jukun, Igbirra, the north-east Yoruba and Nupe being acknowledged exponents. The north-east Yoruba and Nupe being acknowledged exponents. The north-east Yoruba invest a lot of their labour in securing brass objects as grave-goods used in second burial ceremonies of their chiefs and elders. Copper is an important medium in the art of classical Ife, Benin and in those recovered by archaeological excavation at Igbo Ukwu. Copper might indeed have been mined in the confluence area but the suggestion awaits further investigation.<sup>102</sup>

From the land of the 'Apa' ('Jukun') come galena and salt. The salt produced from the Alago kingdom of Keana and other Jukun salt springs were known as far west as

96. *ibid.*, pp. 130-131. For an illustration see Plate facing p. 130 on Agbanabo, see Murray, K.C. 'Idah Masks' (*Nigerian Field*, Vol. XIV, 1949, No. 3, p. 88).

97. Okura songs recording at Odo Ape, Ibuke, (Bunu), Ogbabon (Oworo) 1970 and 1971.

98. Traditions recorded at Olle (Bunu District) August. Also *Notes on the Owe, Yagba, Bunu and Ijumu* (Gbede) National Archives, Kaduna, Lokprof. 41 (2 pp. typewritten), pp. 67-68 in file. The language of Ofosi is not intelligible except to the members of this cult.

99. Boston, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 118.

100. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

101. Downes, R.M., *The Tiv Tribe* (Kaduna 1933), p. 10. Also Abraham, R. *The Tiv People* (London, 1933) discusses the Jukun influence on Tiv through the *tor agbande* (drum chiefs) and the *imborivungu* cult.

102. Obayemi 'Brass-working . . .' *Savanna* (forthcoming).

the land of the Igbirra-Tao<sup>103</sup> and the north-east Yoruba. potash and horses were obtained via Nupeland while the red cloth used for burials and for the regalia of the masquerades by the north-east Yoruba is called *ukpo*—the Edo and Igala word for cloth—and Ikiri traditions claim that these were introduced from Idah and later on traded to the igbirra.<sup>104</sup> The fabrics used in its weaving were scarlet probably imported by the Europeans, to Benin but obtained via Idah.

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103. Ibrahim, Y.A. *The Search for Leadership* . . . , p. 21.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2. The cloths were graded—Arabara, kpon-nu-kpon-yin, Ifale, Ebe, etc. The Ikiri and Abinu were the most famous manufacturers of these and the Oworo, Ijumu, Owe and Igbirra were customers. The use of these in burials (token) was still observed at Ufe (Iffe)—Ijumu in March 1971.



## PEOPLES OF THE UPPER BENUE BASIN AND THE BAUCHI PLATEAU BEFORE 1800

SA'AD ABUBAKAR

The area under consideration is bounded by the Chad basin in the north, and in the south by the Katsina-Ala River westwards to the Bauchi Plateau. The eastern boundary runs from the Mandara highlands southwards along the Tiel River valley down to the Benue and then along the Faro-Deo River valley down to the Mambilla Plateau. The western boundary runs along the Hawal River down to its confluence with the Gongola River and along the latter up to its source. It is an area of diverse physical features and heterogeneous ethnic groups. In this chapter attention will be focussed not on individual ethnic groups but on historical themes, such as traditions of origin, the emergence, decline and collapse of large centralized states, the institutions of government and the main socio-economic activities of the peoples before 19th century. This will be considered on a regional basis, the upper Benue basin, the middle Benue region and the Bauchi Plateau. But first, it is essential to tackle the question of origin since this is widespread among the peoples of the area.

The major ethnic groups of our area of study, the Jukun, the Chamba and the Bata claim migration into it from outside regions. The Jukun, for example, claim entry into the Nigerian area through the country between the Mandara highlands and Lake Chad.<sup>1</sup> Then, it is said, they dispersed in two migratory streams. One moving westwards to the upper Gongola valley where they established their stronghold at Kanem. The other migrated southwards to the upper Benue basin and then westwards to the lower Gongola valley. Like the Jukun, the Chamba too claim migration from the east to the Chad basin where they then settled. But before the 18th century, they again migrated southwards along the valley of the Yedseram down to the Benue plains. The Bata, on the other hand, claim migration from Hausaland to the Chad basin from whence they moved south to the upper Benue valley. In the region north of the upper Benue valley, the various ethnic groups, Higi, Gude, Fali, Kilba, Gabun, Hona, Lala and the Gudu, do not trace their origin to any place beyond Mandara.<sup>2</sup> The Margi in the same region do not have traditions of distant migrations; they only claim retreat from Kanuri-dominated regions after the latter had established

1. C.K. Meek, *A Sudanese Kingdom*, London, 1931, p. xv.

2. See S. Abubakar, *The Emirate of Fombina: 1809-1903* (Ph.D. thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, 1970), pp. 65-69.

themselves in the Chad basin. Outside the Benin regions, in the Plateau area, some of the ethnic groups on the plains to the north of the Bauchi Plateau, the Torok and related clans, have no traditions of distant migrations but only of movements from the highlands to the plains within the same region. However, the Ba-sharawa and the Lerawa among others, trace their origin to Borno.<sup>3</sup> Other ethnic groups within our area of study do not claim migration from the north or east. The Mbula in the upper Benue valley and the Mumuye to the west of the Shebshi highlands claim migration from the south northwards to their present habitat.

All the ethnic groups in our area of study have traditions of movements. While some migrated over long distances, others only moved within a single geographical region. The question therefore is how can these movements of people be explained? It is possible to state categorically that some migrations resulted from intense conflicts and struggles accompanying the establishment of large centralized states in the area. Its demographic appearance lends weight to this conclusion. The upper Benue valley, for example, had, it is claimed, received three important successive waves of immigrants each of which had consecutively established its hegemony over the region before the following the decline of their hegemony. In their new areas they resuscitated and re-established their political institutions, exercising control over non-Jukun peoples. Certainly, this also gave rise to the migration of the latter as they increasingly came under Jukun pressure or dominance.<sup>5</sup> The position of the Jukun in the upper Benue valley was taken by the Chamba who, in turn, were also to migrate to the south following the advent of the Bata who had preceded them. Undoubtedly, this gave rise to some further migrations and brought about closer contacts and social intercourse resulting, as we shall see, in exchange of religious and governmental institutions. The last of the immigrants, the Bata, remained in the upper Benue valley till the beginning of the 19th century.

This off-and-on migration of large ethnic groups is reflected in modern habitation distribution of the groups. The Jukun, formerly found along the lower Gongola and in the upper Benue valley, are at present found predominantly in the middle Benue region. Only small Jukun communities exist on the Gongola basin.<sup>6</sup> The Chamba predominate in the region to the south of the upper Benue plains and on the Donga River extending southwards to the Bamenda grassfield. The last of the pre-19th century migrants, the Bata, exist in small groups along the upper Benue and on the plains to its north and south among the settled Fulbe.

Undoubtedly, some of the ethnic groups on the upper Benue basin and the Bauchi plateau migrated from the north. However, this does not mean that there had been no autochthons but only empty lands into which the various immigrants moved. In the

3. J.M. Fremantle, *Gazetteer of Muri Province*, London 1922, p. 47 and Aliyu Wulumba, "Tarihin Kasar Dallarin Bauchi" (typed MS, in the possession of the author), pp. 1-16.
4. Anon "Gazetteer of Adamawa Province 1936" (unpublished, National Archives Kaduna), p. 9.
5. It is in the light of the above that we can view the tradition of the Apa peoples, Idoma, Igala and the Igbirra. They claim being part of the Jukun though their languages differ from the former's.
6. Such as Kirfi, Pindiga, Gwana and the communities north of the Gongola-Hawal confluence around Jalingo Shani.

north Benue region, there is said to have existed an aboriginal group which the Bata assimilated, and in the south, the Chamba assimilated the Jangani and Kpenyenbu—both being the original inhabitants of the region. Thus, it can be said that in most areas the autochthons that had existed were probably eventually overwhelmed by the alien immigrants, except possibly on the Jos Plateau.<sup>7</sup> This is more likely to have been the case because the period during which the large-scale migrations took place cannot be determined with certainty. What we know is that in the 14th century the Saifawa retreated from Kanem to the west of Chad and for over a century the dynasty led a nomadic life. In c. 1484 the Mai Ali Ghaji established a permanent capital, Gazargamo, on the Yo River, thereby stabilizing the dynasty and creating a nucleus for imperial expansion. The region into which the Kanuri moved was formerly inhabited by diverse peoples, the Margi, Kotoko, Musgu, Buduma and the Ngizim—the legendary So—who became subject to raids and military expeditions from the mais. By the end of the 15th century a new empire, Borno, came into being. Then it entered a period of expansion and consolidation and before the end of the 17th century the whole of the Chad basin came under effective Kanuri occupation and control. Some of the non-Kanuri groups were conquered and assimilated, others remained under vassalage, but, certainly, a large number of other groups in order to escape conquest and subjugation, migrated into the region beyond the immediate reach of the Mais.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is mainly through the activities of the Mais that the migrations from the Chad basin to the south, so often claimed by the peoples in our area of study, can be explained. Similarly, the migrations from Mandara owe their origin to Borno pressure which resulted in the conquest of the kingdom by the Kanuri in the reign of the Mai Idris Aloma (1570-1602).<sup>9</sup> Some groups of course migrated due to shortage of lands on the mountainous Mandara kingdom and some due to other internal problems, such as dynastic disputes which the Maiha group claim as being the reason for their dispersal.

As regards internal migrations within our area of study, they appear to result from general political and economic activities following the coming of what appears to have been more powerful aliens from the north. The Chamba, for example, attribute their dispersal from the upper Benue valley to the encroachment of alien groups; consequently, according to tradition, there were land shortage and hunger. Moving to the Shebshi highlands, the Taraba and the Donga River valleys, they came into contact with the Jukun and other ethnic groups. This was followed by culture fusion and struggles for political dominance, the latter in turn causing further migrations. The Mumuye, faced with the problem of Jukun encroachment from the west and the Chamba's from the east, found refuge in the Mumuye massif, leaving the fertile plains flanking it to be occupied by the immigrants. Also in the middle Benue regions, the Jukun extended their control into the region east of the Bauchi plateau. However, following the normalization of relations, the Torok once more broke loose onto the plains where they remained till the beginning of the 19th century when they became

7. The Wur, Ankwe, Torok and the Sayawa do not trace their origin beyond the Bauchi Plateau region. See Aliyu Wulumba, *op. cit.* pp. 1-16.

8. The Gadzama clan among the Margi claim migration from central Borno to the south, see "Gadzama Chronicle" in *Ethnology Gudu* (N.A.K. 2700).

9. H.R. Palmer, *Borno, Sahara and Sudan*, London, 1936, p. 243.

subject to military raids from Wase.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the great migrations of large ethnic groups from the neighbouring regions into our area of study appear to have been continually going on as from the 14th century and they also appear to have given rise to much internal migrations. Similarly, the prolonged contact between the immigrants and the autochthons, the influence of the dominant over the dominated ethnic groups, resulted in the spread of ideas and institutions from one group to another, making possible culture fusion over extensive areas. Thus, despite the heterogenous nature of the society of middle Benue region, the upper Benue basin and the Bauchi Plateau, the different peoples had come to share certain institutions long before the 19th century.

### The Middle Benue Region

Politically and spiritually, the most dominant groups in this region were the Jukun and related groups.<sup>11</sup> There are reasons to believe that before the beginning of the 18th century, the Jukun's most important habitat was the Gongola and parts of the upper Benue basin. For, in the days when Bepi flourished, "its rule extended through the Upper Benue as far as Rai-Buba".<sup>12</sup> However, in the *Kano Chronicle*, the Jukun dominion is said by implication to have extended from Biyri to Fanda.<sup>13</sup> The former may have been located near modern Damaturu and the latter is generally assumed to be the Panda of the Igbirra, north of the Niger-Benue confluence. But, it may equally be the Panda located on the edge of the Tangale country—an area where some Jukun groups exist. It has also been pointed out in the *Kano Chronicle* that when Sarkin Kano Yaji invaded the Jukun in the 14th century, they fled into the Atagara hill, said to be located on the bank of a big river.<sup>14</sup> This remark has given rise to a number of speculations about the main Jukun centre before the 18th century. While Palmer believed that it was the Kalam hill on the upper Gongola basin, Molyneux indicated that it was the Atagara hill located north of the Gongola-Hawal confluence.<sup>16</sup> Thus, on these bases alone it can fairly be said that the Gongola basin appears to have been the main Jukun habitat. More so because it still contains a number of Jukun communities, such as those of Kirfi, Pindiga\* and Jalingo-Shani. Unlike the other Jukun groups, those in Pindiga have preserved traditions of the Jukun raids against Kano and they may have also been responsible for the military activities against Borno in the 17th century.<sup>16</sup>

10. Wase was founded in c. 1820 by the Madakin Bauchi Hassan as a vassal state to the emirate; Fremantle, op. cit., p. 48.

11. Such as the Gwana, Pindiga, Djen, Kunini, Jemuri, Dobeli, Jibu, Wurbo, Kam, Dampar, Awci, Kona, Gerkawa and Abusuin.

12. "Gazetteer of 1936", p. 9.

13. H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Vol. III, Lagos, 1927, p. 106.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

15. Molyneux, a touring officer, in a despatch to Palmer pointed out that Atagara hill was the one north of the Gongola-Hawal confluence, *Ethnology Gudu*, 1924, (N.A.K.) On the other hand, Palmer regarded the Kalam hill as the Atagara mentioned in the *Kano Chronicle*, Meek, op. cit., p. xxxi.

16. Meek, op. cit., p. xxxii.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 32.



Apart from the Jukun communities, a number of other ethnic groups in the Gongola basin preserve traditions of Jukun influence. The Kanakuru of the lower Gongola claim being a Jukun off-shoot and their political institutions bear striking resemblance to the Jukun of Kona.<sup>18</sup> Before the 19th century the Kanakuru exercised control over some Lunguda, Jera and a number of other groups on the lala Plateau and in the region north of the Gongola-Hawal confluence. The Pindiga Jukun, on the other hand, exercised control over some Wurkum and Tangale groups. Also, the Pabur, on the Gongola-Hawal Plateau, and the Bachama, inhabiting the region around the Gongola-benue confluence, had been sending tribute to the Jukun in return for religious cults. Eventually, through prolonged contacts with the Kanakuru and intermarriage with the Djen, the Bachama came to adopt Jukun kingship institutions. The rites connected with the installation of the Bachama chief resemble the Kam's and Kona Jukun's. The Lala to the north of the Bachama, had also been influenced by the Jukun. Their religious institutions are derived from the Jukun and, according to traditions, they had in the past acted as intermediaries between the Jukun and Pabur.<sup>19</sup> Tribute destined for the Jukun from Viyu had to come through the Lala who, after adding their contribution, passed it to the Bachama for the final transmission. Thus, the Jukun had been influential on the Gongola basin long before the 19th century. It may have been from those regions that the Jukun's well-known external activities in the preceding centuries before the 19th were undertaken.<sup>20</sup>

It would appear from the *Kano Chronicle* that some sort of relations had existed between the rulers of Kano and their Jukun counterparts, but that these started to deteriorate as from the reign of Sarkin Kano Mohammad Zaki, 1582-1618.<sup>21</sup> Hitherto, while Kano supplied horses to the Jukuns, she in turn received slaves. This arrangement might have continued till the reign of Zaki when, according to Pindiga tradition, Kano "was attacked for refusing to pay tribute". Since then, there were further Jukun expeditions against Kano and the other Hausa states, notably Katsina and Zazzau, till the beginning of the 18th century. The motives for the Jukun military conquests seem obscure. Certainly, they were not aimed at setting up an empire. Probably, the Jukun were interested in looting and collecting booty. Kano and the other Hausa cities, as well as Birni Gazargamo which also became subject to Jukun raids, were centres of international trade and therefore obvious targets for any group that was interested in conquest for materialistic reasons.

While the external activities of the Jukun are well known, virtually nothing is known about their internal organization before the 19th century. In fact, what is known about their external activities comes from non-Jukun sources. Apart from the Pindiga, the other Jukun groups do not have traditions relating to the past activities of their ancestors. It can be argued that the present Jukun have forgotten the past deeds of their ancestors because of the time involved. But, if all the different Jukun groups still

18. Meek, "Notes on the Kanakuru" (Numan Archives, D.O's Office Numan).

19. *Lala Traditions* (July 1968).

20. Gujba traditions indicate that their area was peopled by Kwona Jukun and that the Walama (Bima hill) rock was one of their earliest centres. The capital of the Jukun was in the Jalingo-Shani area, probably around A.D. 1385. See J.C. Davies, "Biu Book" (mimeo, Zaria, 1956), pp. 24-25.

21. Palmer, *Memoirs*, III, pp. 116-117.



preserve their traditions of origin, the period of the migrations notwithstanding, it is difficult to imagine that the remarkable military achievements could be forgotten so easily. Similarly, the traditions of the various Jukun groups do not give any indication that an extensive, fairly centralized empire existed in the past. Thus, today the whole Jukun history is quite obscure, only tentative speculations can be made as regards their internal organization and political system.

It would appear that prior to the 16th century, the Jukun lived not under a central authority but in small communities, each independent of the other. But, probably as from that century, a powerful military class emerged among them, possibly to counter-act Borno's expansionist policy.<sup>22</sup> With a highly efficient cavalry,<sup>23</sup> horses being obtained from Hausaland, the various independent Jukun communities were unified under the control of military men. Then, the Jukun began a career of distant military raids against Hausaland to the northwest and Borno to the northeast. However, as from the beginning of the 18th century the distant expeditions ceased.<sup>24</sup> Again no definite reasons can be advanced for this sudden collapse. It was not, certainly, a result of a serious military defeat. Throughout the history of their raids, the Jukun were only defeated once, by the Mai Ali b. Al-Hajj Umar, 1655-84, with a combined force of Tuaregs and Bornoan forces.<sup>25</sup> What is more likely is that due to one reason or another the Jukun military class lost its efficacy. One reason may have been internal problems; or else the Jukun had come under pressure of other immigrants too preponderating in number for effective resistance to be made. One of such immigrants appears to have been the Pabur who, after occupying the Gongola-Hawal Plateau, established a number of petty kingdoms and eventually extended their control over some of the Jukun groups in the south. Similarly, the Chamba immigrants from the north moved to the upper Benue basin hitherto occupied by the Jukun. Thus, the Jukun were opened to new alien influence and were, consequently, compelled to migrate. It can be said that the coming of new immigrants, the Pabur in the west and the Chamba in the east, completed the process of Jukun decline. With the collapse of the military that had previously held sway over the various groups, the Jukun reverted to their previous positions—that of autonomous communities which found it difficult to defend themselves against the gradual encroachment of the alien immigrants from the north. This had started probably as from the 17th century when some groups moved to the middle Benue region.<sup>26</sup> It eventually became the most important habitat of the Jukun. They spread their influence over non Jukun groups and rebuilt their institutions. But unlike the early period of their apogee, it was a religious and not a military caste that emerged as the most powerful. The new Jukun base, Wukari,

22. Following the foundation of a permanent capital, Gazargomo, in c. 1484, the Sefuwa began active military activities in the central Borno area and beyond. This may have brought them into conflicts with the Jukun. see Palmer, *Borno*, p. 222ff.

23. See Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

24. The last Jukun invasion of Kano was in the reign of Dadi dan Bawa, 1670-1703. Palmer, *Memoirs*, III pp. 122-123.

25. Palmer, *Borno*, p. 246 following which the Katsina scholar Dan Marina composed a poem for the Mai Ali.

26. The first Jukun centre was Puje founded by Aku Karakpa in c. 1660, see Fremantle, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-39.

became more of a spiritual than a political centre and the *Aku* (chief) owed his position to his religious role.

By the beginning of the 18th century, the Jukun were well established in the middle Benue region. They lived in chieftaincies, such as Awei, Dampar Gerkawa, Gwona, Kona, Wurbo and Jibu, which acknowledged the religious headship of the *Aku* in Wukari. The system of government in the chieftaincies was common; that of Wukari has been described as a sort of theocracy.<sup>27</sup> The *Aku* was believed to be divinely appointed and was regarded as the representative of the gods, the intermediary between them and the people. Through him were obtained the favours of the superior deities, of the ancestors and the rains to bring about good harvest. In short, he was the symbol and the source of Jukun existence. To obey him was tantamount to obeying the gods he served and represented. Thus, he was very powerful and his decisions were above challenge. Nevertheless, the system of government was not despotic. The power of the *Aku* was controlled in a number of ways. Being the symbol of the Jukun existence, he was often judged by results. Good harvests meant more prestige, but a bad harvest or any serious calamity would make the *Aku* very unpopular and may ultimately lead to his downfall.

The *Aku* was surrounded by taboos which tended to define and restrict his power. A serious breach of a strong taboo would certainly result in the *Aku* being repudiated by the gods and so, to avoid such a happening, he was counselled by a patrician caste, believed to embody the Jukun tradition. Its head, the *Abo* (prime minister), was the representative of the people in their relations with the *Aku* and the latter's in all rituals and in war. He was also a religious dignitary. As master of the royal rituals he used to restrain the power of the *Aku* by threatening to divulge the secrets of the royal rituals. The *Aku's* power was also curtailed by the necessity of his living in accord with the important priests in charge of the powerful cults. Those in charge of the royal cults exercised a restraining influence over the *Aku* because they could undermine his authority by merely exposing the royal relics. The priests were also powerful in the government because they represented spirits, including deified ancestors, whom the people including the *Aku* were expected not to offend. Moreover, in the event of a drought or any calamity it was the priests who had to find the cause and if they attributed it to neglect on the part of the *Aku*, he was finished. Thus, he had to be in complete accord with the priests in order to maintain his position, authority and influence. Lastly, the sacredness of the *Aku* was in itself a factor limiting his power and authority. He was not to be approached directly but through a chain of officials through whom he also communicated to the people. So the officials were in a position to censor information destined for the *Aku* and the latter's decisions meant to be passed to the public.

The governments of the other Jukun chieftaincies were strikingly similar to that of Wukari but without the latter's titles. Each had its chief surrounded by counsellors comprising elders and religious dignitaries under an official equivalent to the *Abo* of Wukari. He was known as the *wuru* in Kona, the *kekeru* at Gwona and as the *senzo* at Dampar.<sup>28</sup> The Jukun chieftaincies had similar religious institutions also. In fact, the

27. Meek, *Sudanese*, p. 332. In fact, he described the Jukun as a 'collection of an unwarlike community of people, more interested in the maintenance of innumerable religious cults under the presidency of spiritual potentates'.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

life of the Jukun was governed by religious cults. Two types are distinguished among the Wukari group, the family and universal. The most important among the former were the *Aku-ahwa* and *Awka* cults, the latter, usually employed to purge a wife's adultery, was a personification of the dead and rites were performed at the shrine of the cult at harvest or prior to it. It was taboo for the possessors of the cult to touch a corpse or to treat with a person who had done so. Similarly, the cult owners should not come into contact with menstuous women or eat food prepared by them. The universal cults were under the maintenance of the *Aku* who appointed the servitors from amongst government officials. The *Kenjo* was the most powerful Jukun cult. It was the patron of the bush, of war, the special protectors of hunters and the giver of victory. Apart from being the mouthpiece of the ancestral aspirits, it was in charge of rains and lightning. Sacrifices were usually made at the shrine during drought for rains, and by the sick for health. Magical powers were attributed to the spear of *kenjo* and it was used by the *Aku* in the past only during difficult wars. The other Jukun groups had cults similar to the *Kenjo* of Wukari; viz, the *Adom* of the Kona and the *Adang* of the Gwona.<sup>29</sup> Such cults were usually deified powerful past chiefs and so the cults were feared and revered by all. Other prominent universal cults of the Jukun of Wukari were the *Yaku* and the *Achu-nyanda*. The former represented the goddess *Ama*. In fact, it was a possessive cult controlled by the *Aku* through the priestess *Avu*. Like most possessive cults, the *Yaku* was patronized by women.<sup>30</sup> The *Achu-nyanda*, on the other hand, was the judicial arm of the government. Being the cult of lightening, rites were performed in cases of theft and it was believed that lightening would strike the house of the culprit.

The authority of the various Jukun chiefs was supported by traditional religion. They were at the head of spiritual authorities radiating from their capitals. Since the beginning of the 18th century, the *Aku* of Wukari was recognized by all the Jukun as a spiritual overlord. Until fairly recently, all Jukun groups used to attend the annual *Puje* festival in Wukari.<sup>31</sup> Jukun influence seems to have spread over non-Jukun within our area of study not by conquest by the military but through mutual contact and the consequent adoption of Jukun institutions. In fact, the Jukun chieftaincies were pinnacles of religious authorities, centres for the distribution of cults. Kona, for example, was important for its control of *Mam*, a cult which was widespread among the people of the middle Benue region. Groups such as the Mumuye, Karim, Munga, Bandawa and Kunini looked to Kona for the supply of the *Mam* cult. Its importance derived from the fact that *Mam* in Jukun theology was the creator god, the lord of the underworld, the fashioner of men and all living things.<sup>32</sup> The various non-Jukun groups used to send selected elders to Kona for training in the ritual of the cult. Then they returned to their groups as priests, but continuing to look to Kona for spiritual guidance. During the rituals, which involved mutilation (slashing of hands) and blood drinking, the priests officiated in the Jukun language specially learnt at Kona.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 269 & 272.

30. The *Bori* cult among the Hausa is greatly patronized by women.

31. See Meek, *Sudanese*, pp. 120ff.

32. *Ibid.*, 197.

The Jukun north of the Benue had influence also over the Ankwe and the other groups to the north-east of the Bauchi Plateau.<sup>33</sup> The chief of Dampar was probably acknowledged as a spiritual overlord and along with Awei and Gwana they diffused Jukun influence. The Ankwe's religious and kingship institutions were derived from the Jukun.<sup>34</sup> While some Ankwe clans paid annual tribute of salt and cloth to the Jukun chiefs of Dampar and Gerkawa, the people of Gumshir and Nyonyon together with a number of Burumawa kindred claim migration to their present habitat under Boi from Kwararafa.<sup>35</sup> It may have been that groups such as these were responsible for the spread of Jukun institutions among the numerous groups in the middle Benue region. For long, a number of Jukun groups had been moving westwards from the environs of Wukari. The Abusuin, for example, claim descent from Sagwum who had migrated with his followers from Wukari to the neighbourhood of Wase towards the end of the 18th century.<sup>36</sup>

Jukun influence was also widespread in the region east of Wukari. The Kam, found north of the River Taraba, claim being a Jukun group even though they do not speak the Jukun language. But their political and religious institutions resemble those of the Jukun of Wukari.<sup>37</sup> A number of other groups have adopted the Jukun language and religious institutions. The Hwaye and the Kpwate regard themselves as Jukun though each had its distinct language.<sup>38</sup> They had also the Jukun cults and priests who carried out the daily Jukun liturgy. Similarly, the Tigong and Nodoro, centred at Ashaku and Nama respectively, speak a language closely related to the Jukun's. Moreover, the chief of Ashaku claims descent from the *Aku* of Wukari while that of Nama claims being Jukun and had under his control the Wukari cult of *Aku-arhwa*.<sup>39</sup>

There is little doubt that the Jukun were the most powerful group in the middle Benue region. Their influence had, at one time, extended westwards to the Bauchi Plateau and eastwards to the Mambila. But the Jukun themselves lived in autonomous chieftaincies whose rulers, though independent politically, recognized the *Aku* of Wukari as the supreme spiritual authority. He was also the "fountain and highest example of divine kingship".<sup>40</sup> The local Jukun chiefs were selected by their respective communities, but the *Aku* had to perform the installation of all new chiefs. On such occasions, he used to confer gifts and pass ritual objects to the appointee. The latter was to ensure prosperity for the new chief and his people provided he observed all taboos. Such had been the relations between the Jukun chieftaincies and Wukari till the 19th century when their dominance came to an end following the establishment of Muslim emirates.<sup>41</sup>

33. Fremantle, op. cit., 51-52.

34. See Meek, *Sudanese*, pp. 41-42.

35. Ibid., p. 41.

36. Ibid.

37. Meek, *The Kam* (D.O's office Jalingo).

38. Meek, *Sudanese*, p. 102.

39. Ibid., pp. 238-64.

40. Ibid.

41. These were Muri, Bauchi, Wase (as a vassal to Bauchi) and Lafia founded by the Kanuri immigrants. See S.J. Hogben, *Muhammadan Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London.

### The Upper Benue Region

The dominant groups in the upper Benue region were the Chamba and the Bata. The former inhabit the country to the east of the Jukun, from the Donga River valley in the south to the Alantika mountains in the north. They had moved into the upper Benue valley from the Chad basin in the 18th century. Their first base was the Bagale hills overlooking the Benue on the north bank opposite modern Jimeta. Then they crossed the Benue and spread along the Faro valley and the region to its east and west. Their leading centres being Sapeo, Mapeo and Zolba.<sup>42</sup> The different Chamba groups lacked a central authority but they acknowledged the priest in Yelli as the most influential person. Undoubtedly, Yelli was the leading Chamba religious centre. The introduction of secular chieftaincies among them is attributed to the Jukun or Jukunized groups. Probably, some Chamba groups had been under the Jukun prior to the latter's decline and southward migrations. It may have been that the subjected or enslaved Chamba regained their freedom after the collapse of the Jukun hegemony. A group known as the Nyakanyare claim migration from Kona, a Jukun settlement in the west, to Mayo Loru in the east and then they moved northwards to join the main body of the Chamba in Yelli.<sup>44</sup> Probably, the Nyakanyare intermarried with the Chamba and then attempted to introduce the system of Jukun chieftainship. According to tradition, a dynastic conflict developed in Yelli between two rival claimants, one claiming succession on the maternal and the other on the paternal side.<sup>45</sup> Following the conflict, a number of groups migrated. The maternal claimants, identified as the Nyakanyare, moved westwards to Sugu while the other branch, the paternalists, moved to the southwest. Thus, Yelli was abandoned.

Following the dispersal from Yelli, a number of chieftaincies were established. The first to emerge was Sugu which was founded by the Nyakanyare immigrants and later yebbi was founded by the senior paternal claimant of the Yelli title. Finally, Gurumpawo was founded by the latter's younger brother who did not want to acknowledge his elder as overlord.<sup>46</sup> A number of other groups also migrated to the south, but not as they claim, as a result of the dynastic conflict cannot be entirely ruled out. After all, the Nyakanyare was an alien group and the dispute that had developed may have disrupted farming, thereby causing famine. Perhaps, therefore, the Chamba of Donga and Daka who claim to have migrated together, were non-royal members who did not necessarily live in Yelli. They may have migrated to the south due to famine, as their traditions say, or to avoid being involved in the power struggle in Yelli. On moving to the south, the Daka remained to the southeast of the Mumuye massif while the other group moved to the Donga River valley. By mid-18th century the chieftaincies of Daka and Donga emerged.

The establishment of the Chamba chieftaincies was partly through mutual contact and partly through conquests. Yebbi and Gurumpawo were founded by assimilating

42. H.S. Berkeley, *The Chamba* (PCJ 345/1922, D.O's office Jalingo).

43. J.H. Shaw, *Notes on the Chamba* (Local Authority Office Ganye).

44. "Chamba of Sugu Traditions" (Collected by the author, Segu, August 1968).

45. "Yebi and Gurumpawo traditions" (author's collection, Yelwa, 1968).

46. Ibid.

47. Garbosa II, "Labarin Chambawa da Alamuransu" (MS, NHRS, Zaria).



the Kpenyenbu and Jangani aborigines.<sup>48</sup> Eventually, the leader of the latter, Sumshin, submitted peacefully to the Chamba leaders, Kingking and Bunjikango.<sup>49</sup> Sugu, on the other hand was established after the Jangani were conquered while Daka emerged following the military activities of Shebshi and Binywa against the Mumuye and the Kwarami people. Similarly, Donga emerged after prolonged conflicts between the Chamba, Tikar and Jukun.

The Chamba chieftaincies, unlike the Jukun's, had different kingship structures. In fact, the various Chamba groups lacked homogeneity of social practice, the custom of each having been modified very considerably by those of its immediate neighbours.<sup>50</sup> Among the northern chieftaincies for example, the only common political practice was the title of the chief, *Gang*. In Donga the ruler was titled *Gara* and the structure of the government reflected that of their dominant western neighbours, the Jukun. The chief was surrounded by secular and religious officials headed by the *Abo*. His functions were similar to the *Abo* of the *Aku* of Wukari.<sup>51</sup> Other leading officials were the *Kowati* who settled inter-village disputes; the *kuni* who was in charge of the installation of new chiefs; the *Nya* and *Gangum*, war chief and field commander respectively. The heir apparent was titled the *Mukodashi*. An important official was the *Mala*, usually the *Gara*'s aunt or sister. Her function was similar to *Anguru-tsi* among the Jukun of Wukari; she was in charge of the *Vonkima* cult and was the 'spokesman' at the *Vara* rites.

The structure of the northern Chamba chieftaincies differed from that of Donga.<sup>52</sup> There was little Jukun influence. In Gurumpawo, the *Gang* was surrounded by two types of officials, the *Mban* (advisers) and *Kamen* (executive). The former headed by the *Kaigama*, comprised the *Gangta* (regent), *Mbanyaso* (in-charge of royal burials) and priests of the most important cults. The executive class was headed by the *Mbanishem* and comprised the *Kuni* (judge) *Mbantam* (ushers) and *Mbansoro* (proclaimer). In Yebbi, on the other hand, the two categories were under the *Banjeano* (chief adviser). The Sugu officials comprised the *Mabnku* (elector), *Ganguramen* and *Nyagang* (war leaders), *Gangtoma* (regent), *kamadimen* (collector of tribute) and *Mbangurimen* (war leader for youths) Yebbi and Gurumpawo had one thing in common; each of the kindreds within them had a number of offices in the government which it should normally occupy. Finally, in all the chieftaincies religion was closely tied with the exercise of political authority. Priests were usually important members of government and their advice was normally adhered to. The religious institutions of the Chamba of Donga were derived from the Jukun. Their cult, the *Voma*, responsible for rain-making, corresponded to the Jukun's *Buhor* while the *Mwa-lebsa* in Donga was equivalent to the Wukari's *Achu-nyanda*.<sup>53</sup> Like the Jukun, the Chamba too had, through mutual contacts, assimilation and conquests, culturally and linguistically influenced their neighbours and subjects. The Kolbila speak a

48. *Gurumpawo and Yebi traditions*. August, 1968.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Berkeley, *op. cit.*

51. See Gartosa II, *Labarin Chambawa*.

52. Information on the political structure of the northern Chamba chieftaincies is derived from the traditions collected by the author in August 1968.

53. Meek, *Sudanese*, p. 284.

language closely related to the Chamba's and a number Mumuye groups to the east and southeast of the Mumuye massif had been under Chamba. Eventually, they even adopted the latter's cults, *vara* and *voma*.<sup>54</sup> However, the majority of the Mumuye lived as autonomous communities within the massif. Most of the village groups, comprising kindred members, lived under the influence of the priests of the *Vabo* and *Vadosu* cults. Their highest political authority was the supreme rain-maker, the *Panti* at Yoro.<sup>55</sup> Other segmented groups included the Vere on the plains north of the Alantika hills, the Nyadang, Waka, Gengle and Bille in the region west of the Mayo Balwa River.

In the region north and south of the upper Benue valley were the Bata groups. Broadly speaking, they fell into two groups, the Jirai an early stratum, and the Baza the later.<sup>56</sup> The former occupied the region north of the Benue, from Song in the west to Holma in the east. The Baza group occupied the valleys of the Tiel, Benue and Faro Rivers. The early stratum was the first to establish its hegemony in the north Benue plains. But, towards the end of the 18th century, their ascendancy was replaced by the Baza's who had migrated from the Benue-Chad watershed region. Thus, they took over the control of the small Jirai chieftaincies, Zummò, Holma, Kopa, Mulon, Bolki and Zulke. These were established by conquering the autochthons, such as the Yungur who had migrated to the Pirmambe hills as a consequence.<sup>57</sup> But the ascendancy of the Baza came through possession of more powerful cults rather than by conquest. They also established new chieftaincies, the most important of which was Demsa-pwa on the Tiel River. Eventually Bata influence extended down the Faro valley after the Chamba stronghold of Lamurde Njongum was conquered and destroyed.<sup>58</sup> Then, other Demsa kindreds established small chieftaincies which acknowledged the authority of the chief of Demsa-pwa. However, the most powerful was Kokumi which was described as "the chief and central place of the Bata",<sup>59</sup> while Bagale is said to have "exercised paramount authority over the neighbouring tribes".<sup>60</sup> On the political organization of the Bata, information is derived from Demsa Mosu established after the conflicts with the Fulbe in the 19th century.<sup>61</sup> The chief was titled *Hemen* and the government comprised officials headed by the *Kpana*.<sup>62</sup> The other leading counsellors were the *Zumoto* (head courtiers), *Zumodogbaki* and *Guva* (civil advisers).

To the north of the Bata, between the Hawal valley in the west and the Kilenge in the east lived the Kilba. The region was an important centre of refuge and had received different ethnic groups from all directions. The Margi from the north, the Pabur from the west and the Bata and Mbula from the east and south respectively. The term Kilba therefore refers to the various heterogeneous elements that had evolved through mutual assimilation and intermarriage. The earliest inhabitants of

54. Meek, *Tribal Studies*, I, p. 446.

55. R. McAllister, "Jalingo Assessment Report, 1921" (D.O's Office Jalingo).

56. W.R. Shirley, *Malabu and Belei Misc. Papers, 1917-46* (N.A.K.)

57. W.O.P. Rosedale, "Yungur District Miscellaneous Papers" (G. 19, N.A.K.) p. 7.

58. Berkeley, *op. cit.*

59. H. Barth, *Travel and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, Vol. II, London, 1854, p. 329.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 479.

61. Grateful to the ex-Chief of the Bata, Enoch Swade, Yola, August 1968.

62. For detailed consideration of the Demsa Bata see Meek, *Tribal Studies*, Vol. I, p. 2ff.

the region were the *jirhuba* who occupied the mountains, each community headed by a *Till krama* discharging politico-religious functions. The centralized Kilba chieftaincy resulted from the military activities of Mandara immigrants from the north and the Mbula from the south. Before the coming of the aliens, the Jirhuba communities were, probably since the 17th century, involved in cut-throat struggles for political and spiritual leadership. Such was the relations between Batari and Bulama kindres in the neighbourhood of modern Hong.

In the 18th century, the position of Batari was strengthened following the arrival of Mandara and Mbula elements. With the support of the aliens, the Batari defeated their rivals but only to be defeated by their allies who then took over the *Till-ship* of Hong. While the Mandara leader Furkudil became the *Till* (chief) the Mbula's became the *Yaduma* (chief adviser). The authority of the new rulers was very limited, the various *till krama* had either to be overthrown or made to acknowledge the superiority of Hong. But because the new rulers had identified themselves with the powerful cults in Hong, they obtained the support of some of the mountain dwellers. Some groups were however conquered. Those that submitted peacefully lived under their *Till krama* who served as advisers to the *Till* Hong. He was surrounded by an elaborate class of advisers in three categories, executive, judicial and courtiers.<sup>64</sup> In addition, there were royal members who served as district rulers, *shall*.

The government in Hong reflected the ethnic heterogeneity of Kilbaland. All the major groups were represented in the different organs of government. The *Till* Hong belonged to the Kabu kindred and the *Yaduma-ship* alternated between the Mbula and Mudaku kindreds. Following the growth of the dynasty, the problem of succession arose but was resolved by adopting a rotation system whereby the *Till-ship* alternated between the two leading royal houses, Arabiu and Mininga.<sup>65</sup> Thus stability was maintained. The Kilba lived in clan villages each headed by a local *Till* and the villages formed districts under each *Shall*. The Kilba religion was an important unifying factor. The *Till* Hong was not divine, but the most important cults centred around him and the leading priests were either his officials in Hong or his vassal district rulers. Similarly, the representation of the different kindreds in the government in Hong was also responsible for the unity of Kilbaland. Harmony and understanding among the various groups prevailed and by the beginning of the 19th century the once heterogeneous elements became mutually assimilated by means of inter-marriage, political solidarity, common beliefs and attendance at the Hong shrines.

Further north, in the Chad-Benue watershed region other Mandara immigrants established the chieftaincy of Muvya. Unlike the Imshi aborigines, the immigrants were hunters and possessed superior weapons.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, they easily subdued the Imshi with the aid of the Fali to establish their political ascendancy under kanara.

63. "Kilba Traditions" (author's collection, August, 1968). Also see G. Chaskda, "The Establishment of Government-General Among the Kilba" (Research Essay for the B.A. (Hons), June 1972).

64. These were the *Yaduma*, *Birawol*, *Batari*, *Zarma* and *Midella*. The judicial courtiers comprised the priests of Duba-Duba, Vidigal, Garga and Jagurmi cults. The leading courtiers were *kadella*, *Sunoma*, *Biratada*, *Barguma* and *Kadakilija*; see *ibid*.

65. Kilba District Notebook (D.O.'s office Yola).

66. Lamorde-Mubi Traditions August, 1968).

This was followed by expansion and consolidation. One of the first acts of the new rulers was to spread their religious influence. Their deities were based at Mijilu which became an important religious centre in the region. The dynasty was first based at Mount Muvya where the first three chiefs, Kanara, Dewa and Kobakoba reigned. In the reign of Jamali, the fourth chief, the capital was moved to Funbare and in the reign of Janataka the dynasty and the chieftaincy were firmly established. The latter is attributed to have possessed over three hundred horses, the centre was finally moved to Golemva. The shift of capitals appears to mark distinct stages of conquest and expansion. Having cavalry and being hunters, the immigrants brought a number of other groups under their control. While groups such as the Matakam and the northern Fali were conquered, the ba and the Muvidi peacefully accepted the overlordship of the immigrants.

At the height of its power, probably in the 18th century, Muvya's control extended north to Mushalla and Wudda. In the south it had common borders with Paka and Kilba. Its numerous vassal states, Dagala, Matava, Vata dai, Digi, Gohal, Wudili and Yawa were governed by royal members appointed mainly to keep them away from the capital. Thus, the possibility of a powerful royal member overshadowing the chief or usurping power was eliminated. The offices in the government were the *Barkuma*, intermediary between the other officials, vassal chiefs and the chief of Muvya; the *Birma*, *Hedima* and *Kadalla*.

To the north of Muvya, the immigrants from Gudur in Mandara established a number of small chieftaincies which acknowledged and spiritual authority of the priest in Gudur.<sup>67</sup> The first and leading chieftaincy, Sukur, was established with the aid of the *Duwa* (blacksmith) by three brothers believed to have possessed magical powers from Gudur. Having taken over power in Sukur the *Duwa* dynasty began to expand its territory and extend its authority and influence. These came about through conquests and the spread of Gudur religious institutions. As regards the former, their periodic raids extended eastwards to Marua while their religious influence extended westwards to the Yedseram basin. Consequently, the stronghold of the Margi, Mijili, was overshadowed by the new Sukur centres, Gulak, Palam, Duhu, Mildu, Wula, Kamale and Kafa-Miya. Their chiefs were installed by the *Llidi* (chief) Sukur by affixing the sacred hair lock which symbolized the political and spiritual vassalage of the wearers. The *Llidi* was the vicar of the gods and was believed to have possessed great magical power. Thus, he was widely feared and respected. He was surrounded by a large body of civil, religious and palace officials. The most senior official was the *Llufu* and the others were the *Medella*, *Barguma* and *Fate Llidi*. The last was regarded as the titular father of the *Llidi*, because only princes whose fathers died were eligible for the *Llidi*-ship. The *Fate-Llidi* was therefore a father substitute whose function was to check the despotism of the *Llidi* through paternal reproach. The religious officials were the heads of the cults concerned with the day to day affairs of the chieftaincy.

The other leading 'Gudur' chieftaincies, Mokule and Kafa-Miya, emerged through the influence of religion.<sup>68</sup> The early immigrants from Gudur arrived with their

67. The main source here is the traditions I collected at Baza and Michika in August 1968. There is also A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *The Kingdom of Sukur, Nigeria Field*, XXV, 2, p. 68ff.

68. Michika and Baza Traditions, (August, 1968).

priests and cults. The former were looked upon for spiritual guidance and direction. Ultimately, two priests, one at Mokule and the other in Kafa-Miya, both on the Magar mountains, emerged as priest-chiefs. Their authority was supported and maintained by bonds of common origin and religious belief. The priest-chiefs acted as heads of the clan leaders. All newly appointed clan leaders had to appear before the priest-chiefs to be consecrated by affixing the hair lock. The priest-chiefs were not, strictly speaking, political leaders. They were concerned with religious affairs; their prayers were regarded as being responsible for the rains. They also performed rites before sowing and harvest and in return they received gifts such as goats, cor, salt and *daura* (cotton cloth).

The chiefs of Kafa-Miya and Mokule acknowledged the seniority of the *Llidi* Sukur, who was also subordinate to the Gudur chief. Mukule in turn exercised authority over the Margi on the western plains. It is said that the Higi were first to occupy the region and so, they were 'land lords' to all the new comers.<sup>69</sup> But, it appears that the earliest Margi settlements, Huyum, Dille, Musa and Multaffu were too small and ill-equipped to defend themselves against attacks, such as were launched from time to time by the Wandala and the Kanuri. Thus, they looked to Mokule for protection. Two of the migrant kindreds, the Mamza and Woba, acknowledged the authority of the Mokule chief and proceeded to the foot of the Magar mountain. The Mamza leader was installed as the 'government-general' of the plains Margi.<sup>70</sup> He then established his base in Baza and appointed *Chiduma* (governor) for the rest of the outlying settlements. The government of Mokule was not very elaborate, the clans were headed by the *Mbugas*. The chief had no body of officials around him except intermediaries (*tulli*) who transmitted information to the *Mbugas* and vice-versa.

The upper Benue chieftaincies have had a number of common characteristics in their development and organization. The founding groups of most chieftaincies claim being immigrants from Mandara or parts of it. The similarity of the kingship institutions in most of the chieftaincies seems to support the claim of common origin. The *Till* Kilba, the *Llidi* Sukur and the chiefs of Muvya, Mokule and Kafa-Miya were religious dignitaries and the authority of each was strongly supported by the sanctions of religion. The system of the installation of chiefs was also similar, the sacred hair lock signified accession to office and the sanction of the gods. Finally, the titles of officials in the chieftaincies were similar, no doubt indicating that contacts and intercourse between the various groups had been going on for long.<sup>71</sup> Also, in all the chieftaincies there were a number of factors which not only bound together the various elements within them, but also accounted for their continued allegiance to the chiefs. In Sukur, for example, the Margi and the Pabur immigrants were bound and held together not through kinship, but by the magico-religious power of the *Llidi*. As the custodian of the most powerful cults his orders were obeyed because doing otherwise meant incurring the displeasure of the gods manifest in bad harvest or widespread epidemics. Similarly, it was believed that should the behaviour of the people lead to

69. Ibid.

70. J.H. Shaw, Uba District 1935 (N.A.K.).

71. Probably also contact with their dominant northern neighbour, Borno. Some of the political titles such as *Bulama*, *Chiduma*, *Zarma* etc. are Kanuri.



the *Llidi* not performing the essential rites before the rains, there would be drought and famine. Other chiefs performed religious functions similar to the *Llidi*'s and they maintained their authority through such functions. In Kafa-Miya and Mokule the chiefs were the foci of unity, and through their religious duties successful harvest was obtained, child birth promoted and epidemics averted. Thus, to offend the chiefs was to offend the gods they served, thereby endangering the welfare of the people.

Social organization among the Bata was on kindred basis and a group of kindreds formed a distinct exogamous social unit, its members regarding one another as brothers. The practice of kindred exogamy was important in the maintenance of kinship bonds. Various exogamous groups had common cults which were associated with the chiefs either through priests or officials appointed by them as servitors. A Bata chief was therefore a focus of ethnic and religious unity. Similarly, in Kilbaland while the *Till* was the priest of the *Vidigal* cult, his *Yaduma* was in charge of the Garga. Both were regarded as custodians of health and prosperity. Thus, the orders of the *Till* were respected so as to avert drought and misfortunes. The need for land and security also served to bind heterogeneous groups under a common authority. In the northern chieftaincies, the Magi, Higi and Pabur were held together for protection against Mandara and Borno depredations. Moreover, the Pabur and some Margi as late-comers, regarded the Higi as 'landlords' and this explains their acceptance of the overlordship of the Higi chiefs. Finally, in some chieftaincies there was little centralization of authority and this tended to create stability. In Kilbaland and the two Chamba chieftaincies of Yebbi and Gurumpawo all the major kindreds were represented in the government. It is remarkable that these chieftaincies still exist in spite of the 19th century jihad in the upper Benue region.<sup>72</sup>

### **The Bauchi Plateau Region**

The peoples of the plateau fall into two broad groups, the autochtons and immigrants. Of the former, the Wur of Lere district claim that most of the ethnic groups surrounding them had found them in their present habitat.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the Ankwe in Shendam area claim that their ancestor came from among the Lalin, a Montol clan inhabiting the eastern piedmont of the Plateau. The Montol on their part, claim being on the hills around Mata Fada from early times.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the Mata Fada Hill is still their religious centre. The Ankwe tradition is that when their ancestor left the Lalin, he at first settled at Jalban to the north of Shendam. He gave birth to two children who, finding no mates, intermarried and so the Ankwe developed. Another tradition is that the ancestor of the Ankwe was an Angas who had moved into the Montol community and got married. Their issues became the progenitors of the Ankwe whose first centre, Pan Lorop, was north of the Mata Fada Hill. Certainly, the two traditions suggest some sort of relations between the Ankwe, Montol and Angas. It appears that there had been intermarriage between the three groups and this probably led to the development of clans speaking variant dialects of the three closely related groups. The Ankwe clans, Piapum, Kanum, Doka, Miriam, Dinmmuk, Kwolla, Bwola, Gworom,

72. See Abubakar, *op. cit.* pp. 233-40.

74. See Aliyu Wulumba, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

74. Fremantle, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

Ladan and Bogolon speak a language which is very similar to that of the Angas, Sura, Thal, Pai and the Chokfien clans to the south-west of the Plateau. Similarly, the Montol and the Ankwe speak of one another as *jan* (twins), a definite indication of common ancestry as the traditions seem to imply.

Before the 18th century, as it appears, the Ankwe occupied the Plateau piedmont around Jalban and Pan Lorop. But in that century, they moved to the plains under the leadership of Logni who established Mudut as his base. Then, some groups moved away because the land was farmed out. Thus, from Mudut they moved to Kwoblong, then, to Ungu, Midgal and Kwokup. Eventually, others moved away and established Shendam. But after about two years, they again moved to Piship on the River Shamankar till the beginning of the 19th century when Shendam was rebuilt. Some Ankwe groups also migrated to the plains from the Plateau. The Bwol, for example, claim moving from the plateau under pressure from the Tal. But on moving down to the Bwol valley they fell into conflict with the Dimmuk who forced them out for a short time. The latter had been occupying the northern parts of Shendam but were also forced to migrate southwards. Similarly, the Kwolla inhabited the hills to the south of Bauchi till the 19th century when they moved south following the activities of the Amir Yakubu.<sup>75</sup>

Though detailed information on the political organization of the Ankwe-speaking peoples is lacking, it is known that a number of clans had been under the influence of the Jukun. The Gerkawa hills to the east of Shendam were peopled by Jukun immigrants from Dampar. The inhabitants of the area were known as Nya, a Jukun word which means scattered. Certainly, the Jukun from the middle Benue valley had been spreading westwards for long and they may have intermarried with the Montol, Torok and Ankwe. The socio-political institutions of the Ankwe were influenced by the Jukun as a result of prolonged contacts and intermarriage. However, unlike the Jukun, the Ankwe lacked a central political authority and so the various clans tended to be in conflict over farming land, such as that between the Bwo and Dimmuk, Kwolla and Kurgwi. As a result of such conflicts, the Dimmuk used to send tribute to the chief of Namu in return for military protection and the chief of Dimmuk was in turn acknowledged as leader by the Gworom. However, the most powerful group in the plateau was the Montol who were feared by all their neighbours, the Torok in the east and the Tal on the northern hills. This fear resulted from the Montol's control of powerful cults centred in Mata Fada, their spiritual base. The Ankwe too regarded Mata Fada as their Mecca. But it was only with the consent of the Montol that they could visit the area to perform the rites necessary for health, fertility and prosperity. Thus, they had to be in accord with the Montol for religious reasons.

To the east of the Montol, the Torok (also called Yergam) meaning people who had dispersed, claim migrating to the south from Tal on the Bauchi hills. They attribute their migration to a quarrel over marriage between Bank and his brother, both sons of the chief at Tal. Thus, the Torok developed from Bak and the Gazum from his brother. The first Torok chief, Bak himself, died at Iche and so it became their religious centre. The other Yergam groups, the Burat and Gani, are said to have developed from Gadon, Bak's son and successor in Iche. The country which they

75. *Ibid.*, p. 47. Subsequent information is derived from the Gazetteer.

eventually inhabited was formerly occupied by the Jukun. In fact the Torok immigrants were permitted to settle in the region by the Jukun with whom they subsequently developed good relations. The Torok had also been very friendly with the Ankwe and their chiefs used to exchange gifts.

The groups that claim migration from outside regions inhabit the northern parts of the Plateau. The Lere, for example, trace their origin to Borno, but add that before moving to the Plateau they had settled in Hausaland,<sup>76</sup> first in Kano and then Zaria where their leader married the daughter of the Sarki. From Zaria they claim to have been involved in conquest till they reached Lere in Bauchi where they finally conquered and assimilated the Rafawa aborigines. Unlike the other immigrants, the Lere claim being Muslims and Hausa-speaking due to their long stay in Hausaland. Their tradition appears to be far-fetched. Certainly, the Bauchi region had been in contact with Hausaland for a very long period before the 19th century. It may have been that either Hausa immigrants had settled in the region or that the autochthons may have been Hausaized due to prolonged contacts with the Hausa states.

Like the Lere, the Zar and related groups also claim origin from the east, except that they have forgotten their definite ancestral home because they have been in the Plateau region for a very long time. One clan, the Sigidawa, claim that their ancestor, Sigidi, was at one time on the Sayawa mountains. After his death, a dynastic dispute developed and so his children and their following dispersed to the surrounding plains. Thus, autonomous settlements, Bogoro, Kurum, Gwaranga, Mwari, Bar and Bom, emerged. Subsequently, new immigrants, the Sayawa, arrived. The language of the immigrants was not very different from the Zar's. What the tradition probably means is that the Sayawa may have been a clan that had rejoined the main body of the Zar or that they were merely assimilated.

The Zar claim that their territory was invaded by the Lere, who had come with horses from the west. The first encounter at Mwari ended in a disaster for the invaders. Not only were they repulsed, but, apart from capturing a number of prisoners, their leader, Biri da Geza, was killed in the fighting. Another expedition against Vok Magut and the third against Bogoro were unsuccessful.<sup>77</sup> The successful resistance of the Zar is attributed to their magical powers. But this is not a sufficient explanation. In fact, the Zar inhabited mountainous areas too difficult for the Lere horsemen to penetrate. Moreover, they built walls between the mountains and remained within. Thus, the Lere failed to conquer them. Subsequently, the two groups lived in peace till the 19th century when the *jihād* began.

The third major group, the Jarawa, also claim migration from Borno though they cannot date the migration. Their first settlement on the Plateau was Bununu in the Bula country. They too dispersed following a dynastic conflict. When Bajimi, a contender to the Jarawa chieftaincy, was by-passed in favour of his junior brother, he and his supporters moved away to Kardam. The Kibo inhabitants of the area were subdued and Bajimi became chief. Other groups in the Lere district claim coming from the neighbouring areas. While the Bankalawa claim origin from Ding in the land Zujgur, the Bigim claim to have come into Borno from the east and subsequently

76. Aliyu Wulumba, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

77. *Ibid.* because when the *jihād* started it was during the reign of Lere's second chief, Jan-Hozo.

The information which follows is derived from *Ibid.*

moved south onto the plateau. Their first settlement was near Wase, then, they moved to Chika, Kobwir, Mudat, Gwabi and eventually to Bijim. The Bijim are probably related to the Angas who also claim migration from Borno to Wase, then to Chika and Kobwir before settling permanently at Tabshin. The tradition of the Angas speaks of conflicts with different groups in the course of their migrations. In fact, before settling down at Tabshin, they had fought and subdued the Famawa inhabitants of the area. Finally, the Basharawa of Wase claim migration from Konkio in Borno under their chief, Tokta.<sup>78</sup> Their migration appears to have been at the beginning of the 19th century, probably following the outbreak of the Falata rebellion in Borno.<sup>79</sup>

The Plateau area is different from the other regions considered in this chapter. Firstly, it was a region of diverse ethnic groups, of aliens and aborigines. Secondly, it lacked an all-embracing extensive centralized authority such as the Kilba chieftaincy in the upper Benue region or the Kingdom of Wukari in the middle Benue. The various plateau ethnic groups, even clans tracing a common ancestry and having a common language and similar institutions, lived as autonomous communities under clan chiefs. The exceptions were the Ankwe and some Montol groups who, at one time, acknowledged Jukun overlordship. Also, some groups used to acknowledge the overlordship of the other in return for military protection. It may have been that the physical nature of the region made it difficult for an extensive polity to emerge. However, the plateau with its numerous small ethnic groups has been in some ways, a very remarkable area. Though there were inter-group conflicts, there were also social intercourse and intermarriage between the different groups. This is perhaps one explanation for the similarity of the various languages. Thus, with continued close contacts and intermarriage, the various groups came to share socio-political institutions. They had also a common outlook and this persists down to modern times. Indeed, the plateau has been an important area of culture fusion.

### **Social and Economic Activities**

The social structure of the people of the benue basin and the Bauchi Plateau was quite organized on a patrilineal basis though some groups, such as the Mumuye, were matrilineal. The society fell into two basic categories, elders and youths. But, each category was subdivided into classes according to age. In fact, for most groups age was the main determinant of social status. Thus, age-group associations were common features in all groups no matter how large or small. Advance from one age-set to another was through initiation. The old men in the societies were generally the 'wise men'. This was largely due to the prevailing educational system. Conformity to the norms of the society and the task of ensuring the continuity of ideal characteristics which distinguished one group from the other, were part of the training the youth acquired through different age sets. Thus, by the time the youths became the elders, they had acquired the necessary knowledge (education) for leadership. The teaching of techniques, such as family occupation, was the responsibility of parents.

Agriculture was the main economic activity, especially subsistence farming. The

78. Fremantle, *op. cit.* p. 47.

79. Their second leader in the Wase area, Yanusa, was deposed by the Madakin Bauchi Hassan in c. 1820. This suggests that they were not long residents of the region.

rainy season was therefore a most important period in the lives of the different ethnic groups. The onset of the rains was of religious significance. Thus, clearing the bush, hoeing, sowing and the like, were all preceded by religious rites performed by priests or chiefs. In fact, it were due to such functions that priests were looked upon for prayers, so too when heavy rains threatened to spoil the crops. Similarly, after the rains, at the time of harvest, rites had to be performed by priests. Finally, there had always existed rain cults among all ethnic groups. Certainly, this is a measure of the importance of agriculture among the different people in our area of study.

The plains and river valleys were the important farming regions. They were also the most favoured areas for habitation. Mountains are generally not good farming regions, but they served as fortresses to which people resorted in time of danger, such as when faced with military attacks. But the inhabitants of the Plateau have developed a system of terrace farming on the gentler slopes. The agricultural year has been about nine months, though the rainy season seldom passes six. Long before the rains fields have to be cleared and in the case of a new farm, shifting cultivation being very common, trees have to be felled, cleared and burnt. Then, ridges are made so that as the rainy season starts, sowing can commence. The main crops vary from region to region, but, Guinea corn, millet and maize have been common. The last has been the main crop on the Mambilla Plateau and *acca* predominates on the Bauchi. The Mumuye have specialized in yam farming.

In the dry season, the people engage in other pursuits, such as hunting, fishing and collecting honey. The first was the most important dry season occupation for most of ethnic groups. Among the Jukun, Bata and Chamba for example, hunting was controlled by the chiefs.<sup>80</sup> They consulted with priests before permitting expeditions to be mounted and after each outing, all the big animals hunted went to the chiefs. Collecting honey was also important among the Chamba, and for the riverine communities its equivalent was fishing. The river Benue shrinks considerably in the dry season leaving pools and lakes which form good fishing areas. Pastoral farming was also important. The autochthons, especially in the upper Benue region, possessed cattle long before the coming of the Fulbe. The Kilba, Lala and Kanakuru, for example, possessed the humpless cattle (*muturu*). These were not herded in the manner of the Fulbe's but kept as domestic animals, mainly for meat rather than milk. Apart from owning cattle, the Kanakuru also practised chicken farming for the supply of eggs.<sup>81</sup>

Although it would be difficult to talk of industrial activities among agricultural people, it should be realized that farming and hunting require some basic tools. The making of such tools—hoes, axes, arrows, spears and knives—constitutes industrial activity. Thus, iron smelting was widespread especially among the inhabitants of the ferrogenous mountains and plateaux. In the upper Benue region, the Lala, Vere and Mumuye were great iron smelters. The ore, usually black sand, was gathered by panning after heavy rains and then smelted into short iron bars, *taje*. It was used as a regular currency and also for making the required farming and hunting implements. Iron-working appears to have been fairly common in the different regions. Traditions

80. See Meek, *Sudanese*, pp. 414-19 and *Tribal Studies*, II, p. 330.

81. Migeod, *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, Lagos, 1927, p. 27.



are still full of accounts of kindred who specialized in iron works. In Sukur, the *Llidi* by tradition had to marry only from the *Duwa* (blacksmith) kindred and in Kilbaland the *Killa* (blacksmith) kindred was in charge of the rain cults.<sup>82</sup> Another important industry among the Bata of Holma and Zummo and in the Chad-Benue watershed region was the making of cotton cloth. Cotton was locally grown and the cloth was made through local spinning and weaving. Up to the end of the 19th century local cotton cloth was widely used, among the Higi for marriage consummation, and for the burial of notables among the Kilba and the Gude of Muvya. South of the Benue cotton cloth was unknown; instead, the people used the skin of animals and bark clothes.

The industry in the middle Benue region was salt-making, especially among the Jukun. The leading salt mines were at Akwana, Awe, Jebjeb and Bomanda.<sup>83</sup> The industry was solely in the hands of women, the role of men being limited to performing religious rites without which, it was believed, the women would have little or no salt. Antimony, (*tozali*) was also worked out at Arafu, east of Akwana, and at Zurak, northeast of Wase.<sup>84</sup> *Tozali* was discovered by the Jukun in the reign of the Aku Matswe but they did not know what it was. Eventually, the Hausa identified it and with the permission of the Aku they began to work it out passing about twenty per cent of the output to the Aku as tribute.

There is little information on trade in our area of study and so we cannot talk with certainty about pre-19th century trade. Certainly, commercial relations existed between the peoples of the different regions as well as between them and their neighbours to the north and south. The Benue River traversed the region from the northeast to the southwest and its tributaries served as channels for inter-region contacts. The Kilenge and the Tiel run from the Chad basin to the Benue River in the south and the Faro-Deo from the Cameroun highlands northwards. Similarly, the Gongola-Hawal, Taraba and Donga Rivers linked outside regions with our area of study. No doubt, the regions were not isolated geographically. They also contained resources that gave rise to internal (if not external) trade. There were iron implements, cotton, as well as wild life, such as elephants. In the 18th century, an important Kanuri settlement of elephant hunters emerged north of the Benue around modern Song.<sup>85</sup> Thus, it cannot be said that trade between the upper Benue region and Borno did not exist before the 19th century. The ivory acquired by the Kanuri hunters were exported north to Borno. Similarly, the traditions of the people in the Chad-Benue watershed region speak of 'going abroad' mainly to Borno in the dry season.<sup>86</sup> Some of those who thus travelled out, did so in search of employment before the onset of rains; but others may have gone to Borno solely to acquire goods and commodities not found in their localities.

The River Benue provided an easy and cheap system of communication and fish to the inhabitants of its valley. The fish caught by the riverain communities were partly eaten and partly smoked for trade. The people of the Niger-Benue confluence, the

82. S. Abubakar, op. cit., p. 53.

83. Fremantle, op. cit., p. 53.

84. Ibid., p. 54.

85. "Song District Notebook" (D.O's Office Yola).

86. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "Tax and Travels among the Hill Tribes of Northern Adamawa", *Africa*, Vol. 26, No. 4, October 1956.

Nupe and Kakanda, used to ascend the Benue to acquire smoked fish for export to the markets of the south.<sup>87</sup> Also, Hausa traders from the north used to visit the Benue to acquire smoked and dried fish for export northwards to the Hausa states. Other important trade commodities in the middle Benue region were ivory along the Taraba valley, antimony mined by the Hausa and exported north and finally, there was salt which was very essential to all communities. The salt trade, which extended southwards into Igboland and northwards to Nupe, was certainly in the hands of the Jukun.

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87. Migeod, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

## KANEM AND BORNO\* TO 1808

JOHN E. LAVERS

The death in 1846 of Mai 'Ali of Borno brought to an end the rule of the Bani Saif, a rule that had lasted for more than one thousand years.<sup>1</sup> First in Kanem, then in Borno, the Saifawa state at varying times exercised authority over most of the Central Sudan but always had its heart centred around the shores of Lake Chad and was always most closely associated with speakers of the Central Saharan group of languages.

**The Environment and Early Inhabitants**

The vast area over which the empires held sway is today divided between the Republics of Niger, Chad, Camerouns and Nigeria. Its boundaries coincide to a considerable extent with the boundaries of the Chad basin, an area of more than 300,000 sq. miles.

At present the region is primarily savanna land bounded by desert to the north and forest to the south. In the past the area underwent many climatic changes, which are reflected in the history of Lake Chad and its environs. The present lake represents the diminished minute remains of a former lake of great extent and depth which scholars now describe as the Mega-Chad.<sup>2</sup> The increasing dessication of the Sahara after c. 8000 B.C. eventually led to the contraction of the Mega-Chad to its present size. In the earlier period the shores of the great lake provided easily gathered food supplies for stone age man while the banks of the rivers flowing onto it—particularly those in what is now desert—supported a considerable population. Communications in all directions were easy. Dessication and the spread of the desert areas subsequently restricted such communications.<sup>3</sup> The most important example of this was the development of the erg or dune country of Tenere to the northwest of Lake Chad.

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\*By a recent decision of the Shehu and council BORNU should now be spelt BORNO.

1. For valuable re-assessments of Kanem and Borno history see T. Hodgkin's introduction to *Nigerian Perspectives*, London, (1961) and J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.) *History of West Africa*, I, London (1971), cited hereafter as *HWA* (1971), for Abdullahi Smith 'The early states of the Central Sudan', pp. 158-201; J.O. Hunwick, 'Songhay, Bornu and Hausaland' in the sixteenth century' pp. 202-39; R.A. Adeleye, 'Hausaland and Bornu 1600-1800' pp. 485-530.
2. A.T. Grove and Warren, A. 'Quaternary landforms and climate on the south side of the Sahara's *Geog. Jr.*, London, 134 (1968) pp. 194-208.
3. H.J. Hugot, ed., *Missions Berliet: Tenere-Tchad*, Paris, (1962).

To some extent, as we shall see, the history of Kanem and Borno is the history of the peopling of the drying bed of the Mega-Chad. By the beginning of the Christian era there were probably two lakes, Chad itself which was linked with the other lake in what is now called the Jurab Depression by way of the Bah al-Ghazal, a situation that continued until perhaps as recently as 250 years ago when the Bahr al-Ghazal outlet of Lake Chad became silted and water ceased to flow.

The drying bed of the lake must have provided ample food supplies for hunters and gatherers, while the many water courses and wet season pools were frequented by possessors of a culture transitional between mesolithic and neolithic. If we are to accept the manufacture of pottery as one of the criteria for the definition of the latter then the neolithic, or more correctly, food productive cultures, were represented in the Central Saharan region at a very early date.<sup>4</sup>

About 1000 B.C. groups of such people moved into the area south-west of Lake Chad known as the *firki*, an area still subjected to annual inundations.<sup>5</sup> To begin with they probably visited the area for only part of the year, later they began to occupy the low hillocks that rose above the level of the flood plain. In time they improved their islands, raising them above even the highest floods by piling clay on the original surface. Cattle-keeping and hunting occupied their time. Later their culture was enriched; stone was traded over some distance, simple pottery figures were made, and agriculture was practised. It is perhaps significant that the cultivation of *masakwa*, a sorghum of the durra race, is even now largely co-terminous with the *firki* lands. The evidence would suggest that culturally there has been little change since, and that there has been more or less continuous habitation in this area since the first settlement. Many of the earliest settled sites are still occupied by towns such as Ngala, Rann, Affade and others—these towns are today inhabited by the Kotoko peoples, who speak a Chadic language. We can draw the conclusion that this area has been occupied by Chadic speakers from at least as early as 1000 B.C. We do not have so much data from the rest of the Borno area but almost certainly its inhabitants were also Chadic speaking as were the peoples to north and north-west. This suggestion of a long history with relatively little population movement seems to be repeated east of the lake, although the evidence is less detailed and less persuasive.

The Tibesti region has been aptly called 'a pole of attraction and dispersion' for the Teda-Daza-speaking peoples in recent time.<sup>6</sup> It is possible to speculate that this has always been so, that it forms the nuclear area for the Central-Saharan branch of the Nilo-Saharan valley language family. Other members of this wider family live in the Nile. It is suggested that we may assume on the present evidence that in this region there has been little population movement for the last three or even four thousand years, that the present linguistic boundaries within the Nilo-Saharan language group and between it and the Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language group reflect a long established linguistic and cultural differentiation.

4. Thurstan Shaw, 'The prehistory of West Africa', *HWA* (1971), pp. 78-119; Pierre Beck, Gen. Paul Huard, *Tibesti, carrefour de la préhistoire saharienne*, (1969) *passim*.

5. Graham Connah, 'Recent contributions to Bornu Chronology', *W. Afri. J. Archaeol.*, 1 (1971) pp. 55-60.

6. J. Chapelle, *Les nomades noirs du Sahara*, Paris, (1957) pp. 40-48.

It is against this background that we must view the emergence of recognizable groups of peoples known to history by name and by the growth of state structures. An older school of speculators who believed in the Hamitic hypothesis saw the area under examination as a region of backward negro or negroid peoples conquered and led to the light of politically centralized states by white—or whitish-peoples from the north or northwest. It is rare for any people to develop in isolation from their neighbours; all peoples tend to be influenced by and to influence others. A process of selection, stimulation, and adaptation comes into operation giving rise to something new yet, owing something to the old. So it was in the Central Sudan.

To the north of our area lies the Fezzan, today an area of fertile oases which in antiquity were of greater extent and occupied by the people known to history as the Garamantes.<sup>7</sup> By the 5th century B.C. they were unified in a centralized state which engaged in trade with the towns of the Mediterranean littoral. The extent of their contacts with the interior is uncertain, although Herodotus informs us that they raided the negro cave dwellers to the south. Such raids were conducted in chariots and indeed rock engravings of chariots indicate routes leading to Niger. Elsewhere he also records an expedition of Nasamomean youths from North Africa which penetrated to a river running from west to east. Although often interpreted as a mission to the Niger, a critical analysis would suggest a route running along the western slope of Tibesti and south to the swampy banks of the Bahr al Ghazal.

Most of the early documentary sources speak of the inhabitants of the regions south of Fezzan as Zaghawa, now a semi-nomadic group of little importance divided between the Sudan and Chad Republics. The Zaghawa soon became known to the scholars of Dar al-Islam through information gathered by traders. Al-Ya'qubi writing in A.D. 872 is the first to mention that they lived in a land called Kanem.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the kingdom of the Zaghawa there were Hawdin, Mallel and al-Qaqu. The ruler of Mallel seems to have held the title of Mai, while the Zaghawa king was called Kakarah.<sup>9</sup> Was it the ruler of Mallel or of Zaghawa who won the wars to become the ruler of Kanem—a Kanem of much greater extent than the present administrative canton? The same writer adds the detail that the ruler of Kanem had extended his authority to include the economically important Kavar oases and at this point external documentation begins to be supplemented by internal traditions as Mai Arki c. A.D. 950 is credited with settling slaves at various points in the oases.<sup>10</sup>

So, by about the year A.D. 1000, a loosely structured but centralized state had come into existence in the region east of Lake Chad. It had crystallized from a number of smaller feuding states probably founded by migrants from further north, states whose growth had been stimulated by the development of trade and the associated needs of

7. R.C.C. Law, 'The Garamantes and trans-Saharan enterprise in classical times', *Jr. Afr. Hist.*, VIII (1967) pp. 181-200.

8. Al-Yacqubi, *Tar'ikh*, see Trimingham, *HIWA*, p. III.

9. Ibid. The ruler of Mallel was known as Mayusi of Mai Wasi. It is difficult to accept J. Marquat's derivation of Kakara or Ka-kura from the Kanuri *Koa Kura* 'great man' (*Die Benin Sammlung*, Leiden, (1913) p. cciv.).

10. Ibid. *Diwan salatin Bornu* Deutsche Morganlande Gessellschaft, Halle, Arabic MS 53. trans. O. Blau, *Zeitschrift der Deutsche Morganland Gessellschaft* (1852) pp. 305-330; Palmer (BSS, pp. 90-95).



security and transport. Oral sources have forgotten their diffuse origins, and the multiplicity of states and suggest that the Saifawa dynasty ruled Kanem unopposed from the very beginning. They tell of Sayf b. dhi Yazan, the Himyaritic culture hero, who came to Kanem and whose descendants ruled the land. This claim was perhaps based upon the similarity in meaning or usage between Kanem, meaning the south of Teda-Daza and Yaman often used colloquially to mean the south. Such similarities were frequently seized upon by Arab genealogists when producing a suitable ancestry for the newly converted rulers on the frontiers of Islam. The claim was known in the Middle East at least by the 14th century when al-Qualqashandi mentioned that the Sultan of Borno 'is descended from Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. But he does not merit this ancestry as he also mentioned that he is of the Quaraysh'.<sup>11</sup> Spurious genealogies should not obscure the achievement of the ruling group who became known as the Bani Saif.

By A.D. 1000 a stable state had been established and imperial adventures began. The court continued to be semi-nomadic, moving around the kingdom on royal progress, but at the same time a number of towns had developed as administrative and commercial centres.<sup>12</sup> The office of Mai had already developed religious attributes of a divine nature—al-Muhallabi reported that 'the people exalt and worship (the King) instead of God . . . and believing that it is (the King) who bring life and death, sickness and health'.<sup>13</sup> Royal seclusion and the idea that the ruler needed no food enhanced such beliefs. Such practices survived the introduction of Islam and in modified form continued until the eclipse of the Saifawa dynasty. 'King worship' provided a unifying focus for the loyalties of the subject peoples. The defeated ruling groups were linked to the Saifawa by marriage ties, a fact important enough to be remembered in the kinglists. The descendants of these unions gave rise to the Magumi tribe which was composed of the main Saifawa line and various clans descended from the early rulers—the Arkiwa from Arki, Ummewa from Umme, and others. The Magumi, the Kayi, elements of the Tomaghera and related groups coalesced to form the people of Kanem, some of whom later became known as the Kanembu. Yet other groups broke away to form new ethnic units such as the Bulala or remained outside the kingdom. Thus clans of the Tomaghera are found in Borno, Kanem and among the Teda of Tibesti.<sup>14</sup>

Just as trade must have played a vital part in the growth of the state so the powerful unified state in turn attracted trade. The Berber Ibadites of northern Africa, pioneers of the Sahara trade, were at an early date drawn to Kavar for its slaves and alum and also on to Kanem. As early as the first half of the ninth century A.D., the Ibadite governor of Jebel Nafusa spoke 'the language of Kanem'.<sup>15</sup> Clearly the inhabitants of

11. *Subh al-Achsha*, Amiriyya Press, Vol. V, Cairo, (1913-22) pp. 279-81. Trans. A. Smith. For a discussion of this legend see Smith, *HWA* (1971), pp. 164-5 and in great detail his paper 'The Saifawa Legend' (presented to the Borno Seminar of the Ahmadu Bello History Departments, Dec. 1972).

12. Manan and Tarazakt together with the towns of Kavar.

13. op. cit; quoted in Trimmingham *HIWA*, p. III.

14. Smith, *HWA* (1971) *passim*; J. Chapelle, *Nomades Noires* (1957).

15. T. Lewicki, 'Traits d'histoire du commerce transsaharien: marchands et missionnaires ibadites en Soudan occidental et central au cours des VIIIe-XIIIe siècles', *Etnografia polska* (Warsaw) VIII (1964) pp. 291-311. The importance of the ibadites as pioneers of trans-saharan trade to the Western Sudan has long been accepted. Thanks to the work of Lewicki their role in the Central Sudan is now coming to light.

the region were in close contact with Dar al-Islam and in the 1080s, a date more or less confirmed in the Arabic sources, the ruler of Kanem was converted to Islam—the same source adds that it had 'been spreading for some years before' and that earlier rulers had read the Quran.<sup>16</sup>

Umme's successors are described as scholars and pilgrims, and the power and reputation of the state grew until the early empire reached its apogee during the reign of Dunama Dibalami whose reputation as a warrior and patron of learning spread to North Africa and the Middle East. Dunama is credited with extending the bounds of the kingdom from Niger to the Nile. Be that as it may, he did carry the frontiers north into the Fezzan where adventurers from Egypt were disrupting communications and westward beyond Lake Chad, where in A.D. 1252 he campaigned against the Mabina, Kalkin and Afuno. On another occasion he fought the Badi who lived close to the shores of the lake, apparently near the mouth of the Kamadugu Yobe.<sup>17</sup> The hyperbole of the *Diwan* credits him with 40,000 horsemen and it is certain that his power was based upon the possession of a strong cavalry and measures were taken in his reign to ensure the supply of fresh bloodstock from the north.<sup>18</sup> In addition amphibious warfare was conducted against the islanders and dwellers on the shores of the lake.<sup>19</sup>

Already the apparatus of Islamic government had been established and while on the *hajj* he founded a *riwaq* or *madrasa* for Kanem students in Cairo. Arabic sources regard him as a great Muslim ruler. Yet in the midst of his success the signs of disintegration were present. A war lasting for the proverbial seven years, seven months and seven days was waged against the Tubu.<sup>20</sup> Other sources mention a war against the Bulala and war among the sons of the ruler.

16. Our information is drawn from the *Mabram* or document of privilege granted to Muhammad b. Mani the agent of Umme's conversion (Palmer BSS, pp. 14-15). In its present form it contains later interpretations but it does represent the accepted version of the Islamization of the Saifawa. (see J.E. Lavers, 'Islam in the Bornu Caliphate' *Odu* No. 5 (1971) pp. 27-53).
17. Al-Makrizi in Trimmingham, *HIWA*, pp. 118-119; Smith *HWA* (1971) pp. 199-201 quotes a passage from Ibn Said which refers to the Badi living on the Northern shore of Lake Chad. Almost certainly an early reference to the Bedde who today live in Western Borno. There are still a few Bedde living close to Lake Chad (*National Archives K(aduna)*). J.R. Patterson, 'Special Report on Mobber District, Bornu Emirate, Bornu Prov., SNP 10/183p 1919). These peoples can probably be equated with the 'So' of Kanuri traditions the Chadic speaking original inhabitants of Borno (R. Cohen 'The just-so So: a spurious tribal grouping in Western Sudanic culture' *Man*, xiii (1962) 239).
18. *Diwan*: The horses of Kanem seem to have been the small type still found in Musgu and certain parts of Nigeria, certainly not suitable for cavalry. It would seem possible that the duty of the hereditary Royal factors of Borno, the Tura Bani Mukhtar, to bring horses from Egypt and North Africa (Palmer, BSS, p. 29, Mahram I) dates from this time. There was continual need for new bloodstock as many horses died of tsetse.
19. Smith, *HWA* (1971) pp. 118-119.
20. It was Dunama who occupied the Fezzan in alliance with the Hafsiids of Tunis (B.G. Martin, 'Kanem Bornu and the Fezzan. Notes of the political history of a trade route', *Jr. Afr. Hist.* X, I (1969) pp. 15-27.

The following 140 years were a time of troubles blamed by Dunama's successors on his opening of the *mure*, the state charm or talisman.<sup>21</sup> Be that as it may, assassinations, fratricidal strife, the ambitions of nobles within the kingdom compounded the problems of the Bulala and led to wars. The decline was arrested for a few years at a time by strong rulers. Fezzan was still under Kanem's control by c. 1300 although the hereditary governors, the Bani Nasur, broke away soon after.<sup>22</sup> In spite of strong resistance resulting in the death of a number of rulers the Saifawa established their authority over much of Borno and trade continued to flourish. After some twenty years of prosperity under Idris b. Ibrahim Nikale his brother Dawud was faced with the rising aggressive Bulala state. Dawud and five of his successors were killed by the Bulala. The third, Umaru b. Idris (c. 1386/7-1390/1), abandoned Kanem on the advice of the *ulama* and established himself in Kaga in Borno. Even this failed to stop the enemy who followed the Saifawa to their new home.

As if this were not enough there were troubles with the major title-holders—the Kaigamas and Yerimas—both offices held at this period by scions of the royal family. The province of Kaga, established in the previous generation, had been administered by the Ka(i)ga-ma and these semi-independent governors resented the presence of their overlords.<sup>23</sup> Similarly the Yeri-ma, apparently an office with an obligation to protect the state from attack from the direction of Yeri (i.e., the north-west or Air region), probably acquired power in this period when the preliminaries to the establishment of the Sultanate of Acades were underway.<sup>24</sup> The listing of a number of rulers in the *Diwan* and *Girgam* without genealogical links with the Bani Saif suggests either the seizure of supreme power by usurpers at a time of weakness and dissension, or possibly the election of strong men able to cope with the deteriorating situation. That strict rules of succession were manipulated for reasons of state has been suggested by the case of Amr b. A'isha, a uterine grandson of 'Uthman b. Dawud. The succession had to some extent alternated between the descendants of Idris and Dawud b. Nikale, but this had not prevented war between the various claimants, thus compounding the troubles of the Saifawa. Smith has suggested that Amr was put forward by the Dawudids in an attempt to avoid a serious confrontation with the Idrisids.<sup>25</sup> By the 1460s the leadership of the Idrisids was in the hands of 'Ali b. Dunama. For reasons unknown he was content to work through nominees by c. 1472, on the advice of certain Muslim scholars, he drove the last Dawudid from the throne and finally brought an end to the civil war.

### The Foundation of the Borno Caliphate

Ali, known as 'Gaji, the small' initially settled on the north-western shores of Lake

21. *Diwan*; Ahmad b. Fartuwa in *Ta.rikh Mai Idris wa ghazawatibi* trans. by J.R. Redhouse as History of events during expeditions against the tribes of Bulala' *Jr R. Asiatic Soc.*, ser. I, XIX (1862) pp. 43-123 and by H.R. Palmer *Sudanese Memoirs* (3 vols), Lagos 1928. (in vol. I) Ibn Fartuwa compares them with the *sakina* (*Qur'an* ii, 249) The Bulala are said to have broken way as a consequence of Dunama's action.

22. B.G. Martin, 'Kanem-Bornu' op. cit.

23. Smith *HWA* (1971) pp. 218-22.

24. Hunwick, *HWA* (1971) pp. 218-22.

25. Smith, *HWA* (1971) p. 181.

Chad possibly building the brick palace-cum-fortress complex of Garumele which controlled the northern route into Borno. At Ladi, nearby, he was attacked by the Bulala. A counter-attack resulted in a major defeat for the invaders from which they took many years to recover.

Not long after this he moved his capital up the valley of the Komadugu Yobe to a site near the confluence of the Yobe with the Kamadugu Gana. Legends relate how he obtained the land from the 'So' by trickery, perhaps an indication that the Kanembu were not yet powerful enough to seize it outright—the associated legend of 'The Torture of the Henna' might be interpreted as a memory of the seizure of large numbers of local women by the newcomers.<sup>27</sup> Such an interpretation is supported by archaeological evidence which indicates that elements of the classical 'Birni' culture including pottery styles were present in the area at least as early as A.D. 1000, a fact that can only be explained by intermarriage on a large scale between the Kanembu and the local women. It was this intermarriage over several generations which must have given rise to the Kanuri people and their differentiation from the Kanembu.

The significance of the foundation of Birni Gazargamu cannot be overemphasized. Its importance was recognized by the Kanuri as shown by the saying: 'Ali . . . who built the city'.<sup>28</sup> The correlation between walled towns and military power and security is shown in another praise song 'Mai 'Ali . . . he of the tall-walled towns and long spears'.<sup>29</sup> The provision of a secure base enabled 'Ali to concentrate on establishing his authority throughout Borno and his successors to direct the expansion into the neighbouring lands. At least as important was the fact that Birni Gazargamu was well placed to become a major entrepot of Saharan and Sudanic trade.

Initially the area directly administered from the Birni seems to have been small, although a considerable part of the surrounding region appears to have acknowledged some form of relationship. The exact nature of this relationship is not yet clear. We know of campaigns waged over considerable distances, while at the same time hostile communities existed within thirty miles of the capital. The answer might lie in the foregoing reference to 'tall-walled towns' fortified settlements from which the surrounding areas were controlled—areas which were also watched by the still considerable numbers of pastoral Kanuri. It is significant that 'Ali's wars were defensive. The defeat of the Bulala was not followed up, nor was his victory over the

26. Also known as Garu Kime (the red walls) Cap. Binet, 'Notes sur les ruines de Garumele (Niger); *Notes Africaines*, 53 (1952) pp. 1-2; A.D.H. Bivar and P.L. Shinnie, 'Old Kanuri Capitals' *Jr. Afr. Hist.* III, 1 (1962) pp. 1-10.

27. There are two legends associated with these events, both involving trickery. The former relates how the 'So' chief granted 'Ali as much land as could be encompassed by an ox-hide. When cut into thin strips the hide surrounded the area that became Birni Gazargamu. The second legend tells of the desire of the 'So' mates to learn the secret of dyeing their hands with *henna*. By a stratagem they were bound with hide thongs, slaughtered and their women taken.

28. *The Brief Diwan* compiled 1165 A.H. (1751/2) reproduced in *Kitab fi Sha'n Sultan Idris*, Kano, (1932) and a translation by Palmer in the introduction to the same pp. 5-9.

29. Palmer, *BSS*, p. 223.



Kona who invaded Borno some years later.<sup>30</sup> The only other military activities were primarily police actions against recalcitrant tributaries such as Lagone.<sup>31</sup>

'Ali's military ability ensured security at home. Expansion did occur but only towards Borno's natural frontiers. The moderation is reflected in his work and an administrator. More so than any of his predecessors he relied upon Islamic advisors, men such as 'Abd al-Qawwata and later 'Umar b. 'Uthman.<sup>32</sup> 'Umar, who became Wazir aided 'Ali in his attempt to rule according to the *Shari'a*, to reduce abuses and to curtail the activities of over powerful office-holders. It was widely accepted that he was the founder of the Caliphate. "Of the Khalifas of Borno who built the city . . . the first . . . was our Lord Amir al-Mu'minin and Sultan of the Muslims, 'Ali b. Dunama", wrote an 18th century scholar.<sup>33</sup> The decision to claim the Caliphate can perhaps be seen as a counter to the activities of his contemporary Askia Muhammad of Songhai who returned from the *hajj* as Khalifa of Takrur in 1495. When 'Ali died in 1503 he left a state, still small, but secure with great potential. The foundations were well laid and his successors built on them.

Idris b. 'Ali, known as Katagarmabe, is remembered for his military activity over a wide area. His greatest achievement was to defeat the Bulala Sultan, and re-enter Njimi the ancient capital of Kanem 122 years after its evacuation. Unfortunately his victory and the treaty that followed resulted in only a short peace—a paradigm of Borno-Bulala relations for the next three-quarters of a century. The accession of a new Mai would be followed by a Bulala attack, then a Borno counter-attack, victory and a peace treaty. Only after Idris Aloma's victories later in the century and the rise of the Tunjur and Bagirmi states to the east and south of the Bulala kingdom was the problem solved.

At this time another long term problem arose in the west—Songhai. Askia Muhammad's reduction of the major Hausa states to tributary states c. 1510 followed by a campaign against Agades directly impinged upon an area that had been regarded, however loosely, as within Borno's sphere of influence. Idris and his successors raided the area and possibly encouraged revolts. However the paucity of information relating to this period of Hausa history make our task of interpretation difficult—all we can say for certain is that for many years both states regarded the region as their own. How far these activities disrupted the developing trade through Hausaland is uncertain.<sup>35</sup> Leo Africanus attests to the importance of this trade and the associated growth in caravan raiding by the Ngizim peoples on the Borno borderlands.<sup>36</sup> It is possible that

30. Palmer, *BSS*, p. 223; the form Kona has been followed in this chapter in preference to variants Kwana, Kororofa or Kwararafa.

31. Palmer, *BSS*, 26-28; The *Kano Chronicle* refers to a campaign against Kano by Mai of Borno in the reign of Sarkin 'Abdalla (c. 1499-1509) *SM III*, p. 112.

32. Palmer, *BSS*, pp. 21-22 and 23-28. Both families remained prominent for several centuries (A.D.H. Bivar, 'A dated Koran from Bornu', *Nigerian Magazine* 65 (1960) pp. 199-205).

33. Brief Diwan.

34. J.E. Lavers, 'Islam in the Bornu Caliphate.' *Odu ns* 5 (1971) pp. 27-53.

35. Hunwick, *HWA* (1971) pp. 202-39; the late Musa Baba Idris in his draft Ph.D. thesis convincingly identifies Leo's Guangara/Wangara with the Borgu state of Mikki. This would seem to suggest that the trade route from Hausaland towards the area that later became Gonja was already established (see also P. Lovejoy's paper on the Wangarawa in Hausaland *Kano Studies*, 1, 2 (1973)).

36. Jean-leon! African, *Description de l'Afrique*, Paris, (1956) p. 473. Leo's Zingari in this context must refer to the Bedde/Ngizim peoples who were famous caravan raiders in this very area until the present century.



the raid mentioned in the *Kano Chronicle* against Nguru in the reign of Sarkin Muhammad Kisoki (c. 1509-65) was a result of this propensity for raiding although the Borno counter-raid the following year suggests the situation was more complex, and might even be connected with Songhai's activities in the area.<sup>37</sup>

The interests of the Borno government extended beyond the lands of the Sudan. Missions were despatched to renew ties with northern Africa and to seek *les marchandises d'Europe*.<sup>38</sup> The importance of trans-Saharan trade was probably behind Borno's role in the establishment of the Awlad Muhammad dynasty in the Fezzan at this time.<sup>39</sup>

Idris died in the Lower Gongola region, an area through which the Konà had raided Borno in the days of his father. The early sixteenth century was a period of intensive state formation among the Chadic-speaking peoples in the area south and southwest of Borno, from Mandara through Babur country to the Bolewa. Such a potentially dangerous development was likely to interest the rulers of the Caliphate.<sup>40</sup>

The sons and grandsons of Idris had to cope with continued Bulala and Songhai incursions. In 1544/1545 Mai 'Ali b. Idris was killed by the Bulala. In 1554/1555 Songhai actually raided Borno territory while soon after c. 1561 the Kebbi-Borno war occurred at the end of the reign Dunama b. Muhammad.<sup>41</sup> While Songhai had conquered Agades in 1515 there is evidence to suggest that it was brought under Borno in 1532/1533. Certainly Kebbi's attempts to control the area in the time of Kanta Muhammad led Agades to call on Borno for aid. The invasion of Kebbi was unsuccessful and the retreating forces of Borno were pursued as far as Nguru. Kanta's death on his victorious return journey terminated a dangerous threat to the Caliphate.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout this period diplomatic and commercial links were maintained with Tripoli and Tunis resulting in an *alliance d'amitié et de commerce* in 1555.<sup>43</sup> There is some suggestion that firearms were used in Borno before the usually accepted date in the reign of Idris Aloma, possibly as a consequence of this alliance.

### Idris b. 'Ali c. 1569-1600

The dynastic history of the Saifawa in the mid-6th century is confused. Oral traditions relate how the Magira, the senior royal female, 'A'isha Kili bint Dunama acted as

37. *Kano Chronicle*, SM III p. 113.

38. Bibl. Nat. (Paris), M.S., français (ancien fonds) 12219 & 12220, '*L'histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripolie*,' This work was compiled, probably by a certain Girard, in the 1670's.

39. J. Lethielleux, *Le Fezzan, ses jardins, ses palmiers*, IBLA, Tunis, (1948) p. 18.

40. Relatively little work has been done on these regions. However, see B.B. Mubi, *Outline of Mandara History from Early Times to 1900 A.D.* (Final Year, Special Honours Dissertation, Department of History, Abdullahi Bayero College, Ahmadu Bello University 1973); V.N. Low, *Three Nigerian Emirates*, Evanston, 1973; J.E. Lavers, 'History and people of Fika Emirate' *New Nigerian* 23 Dec. 1972.

41. cAbd al-Rahman al-Sacdi, *Ta'rikh al-Sudan* (Arabic text and translation O. Houdas, Paris 1964) trans. p. 169. See also M.B. Alkali, *A Hausa Community in Crisis, Kebbi in the Nineteenth Century*, M.A. Thesis. Ahmadu Bello University (1966).

42. Hunwick, *HIWA* (1971) p. 223; Alkali, *A Hausa Community in Crisis* (1966).

43. With Dragud Basha of Tripoli, French Surgeon, *Discours historique*.

regent for the young Idris b. 'Ali having earlier saved him from threats to his life by both her father and her brother 'Abdullah. Idris, the posthumous son of his father, must have been at least seventeen years old at the death of Dunama and in his twenties on the death of 'Abdullah—hardly young enough to need a regent. In addition none of the Arabic records refer to the Magira or to a regency, 'A'isha may have saved his life. He seems to have spent some years with his maternal kin, the Bulala. She perhaps even recalled him at the critical time for his succession, but until more evidence is available we can note the tales but must not draw any conclusions.<sup>44</sup>

That the Caliphate reached its apogee under the wise leadership of Idris is an accepted fact among the historians of Borno. By the twelfth year of Idris's reign Ibn Fartuwa was comparing him with his illustrious namesake Idris Katagarmabe.<sup>45</sup> The new evidence coming to light shows that he did play a significant role in the history of the Sudan in the second half of the 16th century, that he was active at home as a soldier, administrator and Islamiser, while in foreign affairs he was a skilled diplomat and negotiator, corresponding with the major Islamic powers of the day.

Within days of his appointment as Mai the first crisis of the reign occurred—a raid under the Bulala Sultan himself penetrated almost to the capital. The invaders were repulsed and in the course of six campaigns the Bulala and their allies were defeated and the Mai's maternal uncle Muhammad was placed upon the throne. A more important consequence for Borno was the signing of a covenant by which Kanem was partitioned, the major portion falling to Borno. We do not have sufficient evidence to say whether or not this agreement brought an immediate end to several centuries of warfare. We can, however, say that there are no further reference to conflicts in the surviving records.

It must be clearly stated that we have no evidence for widespread conquests beyond Kanem, in spite of the frequent claims to the contrary. Idris's major contributions to Borno history lay within the metropolitan area. For reasons that we cannot explain pockets of resistance as represented by the original inhabitants of Borno had been allowed to exist and to endanger the internal security of the state. Some such foci of resistance existed within a day's march of the capital. The problem was resolved over a period of time by a scorched earth policy and continual harassment by which the dissident elements were forced either to submit or migrate. In the south of the country dissident groups such as the Gamaghu were contained by a series of *ribats* or frontier fortresses on the Borno side of the frontier and by alliances with the rulers of the nascent states of the Mandara and Pabir on the other.

In the west the Ngizim and related peoples were punished for caravan raiding and for attacking the pastoral Fulani who must already have been grazing their herds in the so-called great forest region. Further to the west Kano had established a series of strong points from which to threaten western Borno. A campaign successfully resulted in their destruction although the army failed to take Kano city. Other campaigns

44. Hunwick, *HWA* (1971) p. 207, and 'The Dynastic Chronologies', *KS*, No. 1, 1 (1971) pp. 35-55.

45. Ahmad B. Fartuwa, (see Notes 36 and 44); J.E. Lavers' review of the Cass reprint of *Mai Idris of Borno, 1571-1583*, London, (1970), in *Jr. Hist. Soc. Nigeria*, (forthcoming).

overawed the inhabitants of the developing states of the Gongola region and the southern Abzin area.<sup>46</sup>

The efficiency of Mai Idris's armies was greatly enhanced by numerous innovations in the spheres of transport, supply and armaments. A camel corps was instituted facilitating campaigns against the Tuareg and the control of Kawar, while improved boats speeded up river crossings. In addition, the building of *ribats* garrisoned by regular troops, the storing of military supplies at strategic points and the training of disciplined companies of gunmen enabled him to meet any emergency and rapidly to recover from any reverse.

Idris is credited with the introduction of firearms into the central Sudan. Certainly he was very interested in their use and utilized foreign experts to train his men from the early years of his reign. Indeed this early interest—an interest developed before he made the *hajj* with its opportunity to see gunmen in northern Africa—suggests that guns were already used by his immediate predecessors, a not improbable suggestion when we remember the treaty signed with Dragud (Turgut Ra'is) Basha of Tripoli in 1553.

To accept this suggestion is not to underrate Idris's contribution to military science, for it would seem on Ibn Fartuwa's evidence that the Mai, unlike so many rulers who adopted firearms, immediately recognized the need for training. It was not sufficient just to use the guns; disciplined firepower was what counted. Indeed he seems to have extended the idea to other arms as we read of disciplined units of spearmen and bowmen. He probably reached this conclusion with the aid of his 'Turks', adventurers from North Africa experienced in the use of the complicated arquebus, the cumbersome form of gun available at the time. The end result was the establishment of a corps of gunmen who proved to be especially valuable in the prosecution of siege warfare as well as in open battle.

'Turkish' adventurers were not the only foreign elements to visit the country. Numerous North African scholars were also attracted to the court which thereby gained a cosmopolitan character. Possibly under their influence together with the sights and experiences of his pilgrimage, Mai Idris introduced a number of reforms which attempted to bring the country more into line with other Islamic lands. These reduced the influence of 'ada' (customary law) and emphasized the Shari'a. He attempted to remove the administration of the law courts from the control of the title holders. His campaigns against Dar al-Harb were called *jihad* and in general he conscientiously attempted to fulfil the obligations of an Islamic ruler.

When in 1575 the Turks occupied Fezzan and Sultan Muntasir fled to Hausaland,<sup>47</sup> Idris quickly renewed the friendly relations between Borno and Tripoli, in spite of the close ties between the Awlad Muhammad and the Saifawa. However, the Ottoman

46. The evidence provided by Ibn Fartuwa has been substantiated and supplemented in recent years by materials discovered in Istanbul (B.G. Martin 'Mai Idris and the Ottoman Turks,' *Int. Jr. Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972) pp. 476-479). In spite of the chronological problems the French surgeon Girard's *Discours* (note 57) has also provided valuable data. It is, however, the rediscovery of the writings of the Italian cosmographer Giovanni Lorenzo Anania (*L'Universale fabrica del mondo, Overo Cusmogrofia*, Naples (1573 & 1576), Venice, (1852) that have substantiated much of Ibn Fartuwa's material.

47. G.A. Krause, 'Zur Geschichte von und Tripoli un Afrika'. *Fesun Zeit des Gesell f. Erdkunde*, Berlin, Bd. 13 (1878) 356-373 which appears to be a version or perhaps shares a common source with Ib Galbun's 18th century chronicle (E. Rossi, ed., *La cronaca Arabe Tripolina di Ibn Galbun* (see xviii), Bologna, 1936).

occupation of the frontier fortress of Goran, a fortress claimed by Borno, resulted in an embassy under a certain al-Hajj Yusuf which was sent directly to the Sublime Porte. The Sultan Murad III refused to withdraw his men but ordered his officers in Tunis to provide Idris with any aid he might require for the prosecution of a *jihad*. In the event little benefit was gained from this relationship and the revolt of the inhabitants of the Fezzan and their massacre of the Turkish garrison in 1578 solved the problem of Goran.

In 1584, disillusioned with Turkish promises Idris turned to their greatest rivals, the Sa'adians of Morocco. Al-Hajj Yusuf was again chosen as ambassador and led a number of embassies to the court of Ahmad al-Mansur<sup>48</sup> the outcome of which was, according to Moroccan sources, that Borno accepted al-Mansur's claim to be khalifa of the age and that the *khutba* was said in his name. Moroccan claims were advanced as part of al-Mansur's confrontation with the Ottomans who also claimed the Caliphate and in connection with his plans for extending his authority over the Sudan. Borno's acceptance of his claim, if accept it they did, strengthened his demands on Songhai and promised to provide an ally or loyal subordinate able to threaten the latter's eastern borders. Such must have been the intention, in practice the negotiations produced little of value for Borno and for Idris. It is significant that when in 1591 the Songhai army was defeated by the Moroccans the fugitive Askia Ishaq sought refuge in Borno territory.<sup>49</sup>

Evidence relating to Idris's last years is scanty. We know however that the newly established state of Bargimi under the dynamic leadership of 'Abdullah b. Luketko (died c. 1607) was troublesome and it was while on campaign against 'Abdullah that the aged Idris was assassinated.<sup>50</sup>

Many writers have accepted uncritically the view that the empire collapsed on the death of Idris; the available evidence suggests otherwise. While the period of military expansion had come to an end, the gains were not lost. Rather the 17th century was a time in which the conquests of the previous century were consolidated and their administration rationalized. There are grounds for believing that Borno hegemony increased as some states placed themselves voluntarily under the protection of what was now the most powerful state in the Sudan following the fall of Songhai.

This position was not unchallenged and for the next hundred years intermittent warfare was carried on with the Kona in the south-west, while Agades became strongly hostile to the north-west. Borno's encouragement of the growth of small friendly states around the borders of the country can be interpreted as a precautionary measure to provide a buffer region between the metropolitan provinces and potential enemies. This policy had begun in the previous century. Idris, for example, had intervened and the rulers of the Pabir state were given support.

The throne now passed in succession to three capable sons of Idris. Muhammad (c. 1600-1616); Ibrahim (c. 1616-1623) and 'Umar (c. 1623-1642). The first crisis of Muhammad's reign might have been inherited from the last years of his father, as it

48. cAbd al- cAziz al-Fishtali *Manabil al-safa* quoted in Ahmad b. Khalid al-Nasiri, *Kitab al-Istiqsa*, Casablanca, (1954), V, pp. 104-11 (trans. A. Smith.)

49. cAbd al-Rahman al-Sacdi, *Ta'rikh al-Sudan* (trans.) p. 227.

50. J.C. Patterson, 'Special Report on Uje District, 'Bornu Emirate, Bornu Province, NAK, S.N.P. 69p (1920).

involved Borno's embroilment in a succession dispute in Agades. There the Sultan Yusuf, whose claim to the throne was through his mother, was appointed c. 1594. However his cousin Muhammad al-Mubarak, grandson of a previous sultan obtained Borno's backing in an attempt to seize the throne. Yusuf was deposed but in turn he sought foreign allies and was restored with the help of Kebbi. A period of confused fighting followed in which both parties had varying fortunes until finally Muhammad al-Mubarak was taken prisoner and died in captivity. Thereafter Yusuf and his heirs remained intensely hostile to Borno. Endemic raiding by various Tuareg groups was interspersed with major campaigns directed by the Sultan which ultimately brought about the abandonment of most of the Borno settlements on the desert fringe.

Ibrahim's relatively short reign is said to have been taken up with ten battles and thirty skirmishes but unfortunately we are not informed of their location.<sup>51</sup> The fact that his brother Muhammad died during a *jihad* in Kanem suggests we might seek an answer in that direction.

In the years that followed the partitioning of Kanem between Borno and the Bulala in the 1580s the latter gradually lost their predominant position. The aggressive new Tunjur state, based upon Kadama, was pressing down the valley of the Batha towards Lake Fitri, while Bagirmi pushed its frontiers up from the south. About 1630 the Tunjur were overthrown in their turn by 'Abd al-Karim b. Jame, founder of the Wadai sultanate, and the refugees fled towards the borders of Kanem.<sup>52</sup> This period of population movement and unrest undoubtedly occupied the attention of Borno and also certainly prompted the reorganization of Kanem that took place some years later.

### The Age of Consolidation

We have suggested that the 17th century was a time of consolidation. The evidence suggests that the reign of 'Umar marked an important stage in the development of the Borno state, and that in the years between his accession, c. 1623, and the death of his son 'Ali, c. 1680, the state began to assume the classical form remembered in oral traditions. It might be said that they did their work very well for the system survived with little change until the time of the Fulani *jihad*, with the result that by the late 18th century the earlier military and administrative flexibility had been lost and the system had become ossified and incapable of adapting itself to new conditions.

All sources remember 'Umar as a hard unrelenting ruler: in the words of a *girgam*, " 'Umar the Warrior . . . who would brooke no opposition."<sup>53</sup> The *Fezzan Chronicle* records his execution of Sultan al-Mansur and his sons, while Muhammad Bello in *Infraq al-Maisur* accuses him of martyring the learned Shaykh al-Jarmiyu. The little information that we have suggests that such actions were not simply manifestations of arbitrary power but rather were taken for justifiable reasons of state.

When his son 'Ali ascended the throne c. 1642—he was still a young man but with experience of the wider world as he had accompanied his father on the hajj in 1634. Pious and scholarly by nature, he was to make four more pilgrimages, and was able to

51. Palmer, *BSS*, p. 244.

52. G. Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan*, Vol. IV, trans. A.G.B. Fisher and H.J. Fisher, London (1971), pp. 205ff; M.-J. Tubiana, 'Un document in edit sur les sultans du Wadday', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 2 (1960) p. 49-112.

53. *BSS*, p. 245, 'The Mai who made men like a ball of chaff'.



surmount all the problems that faced him in his long reign — Agades and the Kororofa of Kona abroad, dissident nobles at home and the problems of administering his great inheritance.

In Agades Sultan Yusuf had been succeeded by his son, another Muhammad Mubarak. His long reign of thirty-four years coincided with 'Ali's. Under his leadership Agades seems to have been at its most powerful and in consequence raiding increased, finally escalating into a series of invasions of Borno territory which in turn brought about retaliatory invasions of Abzin.

The worst consequences of the raids were avoided by establishing fortified towns along the desert fringe under the control of the Yerima. Remembering Borno's long term policy of protecting itself with buffer states, it is significant that the tributary of Muniyo was founded about this time and quickly became a major barrier to direct attacks on Borno.<sup>54</sup> In 1657 'Ali led an army to Agades but his victory was apparently not sufficient to deter the enemy for long and some ten years later c. 1667 when he was on his fourth pilgrimage al-Mubarak besieged Birni Gazargamu itself, ravaged the northern provinces and even succeeded in carrying off members of the royal family into captivity.

The causes of these conflicts, in addition to the rivalry between the ruling families, must be sought in the age-old jealousy between the nomads of the desert and the sedentary inhabitants of the savannah, in this case exacerbated by competition for the control of the carrying trade between the Sudan and the north. The Tuareg of Agades controlled the route from Hausaland to Fezzan, while Borno controlled the direct route via Kavar. Both sought to monopolize transportation on their own routes. Further, there was the problem of Bilma salt, where the deposits were owned by Borno but the production was mainly carried away by subjects of the Sultanate of Agades. It is not a criticism of 'Ali to say such problems were insolvable so long as the traditional politics and economic existed.

The other major adversary linked with 'Ali's name in legend and history was the Kona state or states. 'Ali Gaji had fought them in the early 16th century. Later in the same century they began raiding the Hausa area and by the middle of the century they had defeated both Kano and Katsina, on a number of occasions entering Kano City. Who were the Kona? It is agreed that they were connected with the Jukun peoples but with which groups is uncertain — the inhabitants of Wukari, today the capital of the leading Jukun ruler, have no traditions of any past military exploits. It is possible that the Jukun of Pindiga in Gombe were more aggressive but at this stage we can say no more than that the Kona were a people who lived in the Gongola-Benue region.<sup>55</sup>

It is possible that the Kona threat brought an end to the Kano-Katsina wars but even then neither was able to stem the invasions. The celebrated poem of the Katsina scholar, Dan Marina, records the relief felt when news arrived of a major defeat of the Kona ruler Luwefaru by Mai 'Ali "in the land of the heathen". From the accepted date of the poet's death this must have occurred before 1655.<sup>56</sup> As in the case of the defeat

54. Landeroin in *Documents scientifiques de la mission Tilho* (1960-1909), Paris (1911), Vol. II, p. 403f; A.K. Beniokikh Field Notes from Machena and Nguru 1971.

55. See Saad Abubakar, 'The peoples of the Upper Benue Basin and the Bauchi Plateau from the early times to c. 1800', in this volume.

56. The poem has only been published in translation (Palmer BSS, pp. 246-247).

of Agades, however, this victory did not bring an end to the conflict. Echoes of the wars reached North Africa where it was noted that the king of Borno was at war with the 'Emperor of Ethiopia' and that the latter had invaded Borno. This invasion must be the source for the oft repeated tale of the double siege of the Birni by Kona and Tuareg. Time and oral tradition have linked the two separate historical events. Hostilities continued until the early 18th century, only coming to an end in the reign of Dunama b. 'Ali.

In addition to their skill as warriors 'Umar and his son appear to have been administrators of ability. Evidence suggests that the vice-royalties of Nguru and Kanem were established in their time. The first Galadima was established at Nguru between 1630 and 1645, the son of 'Umar by a concubine, with responsibility for the territory 'from the Niger to the gates of the Birni'.<sup>57</sup> In Kanem the Khalifas of Mao began to exercise authority about the same time administering the lands east of Lake Chad.

This delegation of authority to two officials living away from Birni Gazargamu had far-reaching consequences. The ambiguous relationship between Borno and the Hausa states where they paid tribute through Daura and the Galadima,<sup>58</sup> came about with the establishment of the latter at Nguru as a strategic centre for rapid penetration of Hausaland. As Abdullahi Smith has pointed out, Nguru 'was within some 80 miles of the north-eastern corner of Zazzau with easy and direct communication between the two states by the valley of the Iggi River'.

The ancient Nguder states of Shira, Teshena and Auyo also came under the control of the Galadima.<sup>59</sup> In the Sosebaki area the ruler 'Abdullah (c. 1627-72) unsuccessfully tried to have himself placed directly under the Mai in order to protect himself from the interference of Nguru. Clearly a tighter grip was being established over the western sphere of influence following the emergence of Nguru.

That there was apparently no open resistance leads one to suggest that the states were persuaded to accept the position by a combination of circumstances: Kona invasions; Kebbi and Abzin raids; the role of Borno in combating them; and the reputation of Borno as undisputed leader of the Islamic states of the region, the acknowledgement throughout the area that she was one of the four sultanates of the Islamic world.<sup>60</sup> Whatever the cause the consequence was the successful consolidation and formalization of the former loose ties.

In the east a similar series of events took place. The territories falling to Borno after the partitioning of Kanem in the 1580s were loosely administered by clan heads and governors of provinces, most of whom were probably non-residents. The territories beyond the Bahr al-Ghazal were again a sphere of Borno influence—the Tunjur had recognized her primacy if nothing else, but there were no formal ties.<sup>61</sup> The Unjur expansion, and subsequent collapse, although followed by the foundation of Wadai

57. P. A. Benton, *Kanuri Readings*, London (1911), pp. 25-26.

58. 'Abd al-Qadir b. Mustafa, *Rawdat al-Afkar*.

59. J. M. Fremantle, 'A history of the region comprising the Katagun Division of Kano Province' *Jr. Afr. Soc.* X (1910-11) 298-319.

60. Mahmud al-Kati, *Ta'rikh al-Fattah* trans. O. House & M. Delafosse, Paris (1964) p. 65.

61. G. Nachtigal (*Sahara and Sudan*, London, (1977), p. 208) was told that Abd al-Karim paid tribute 'to Bornu, whose intervention in favour of the Gunjur he thereby averted'.

and its recognition of Borno, led to considerable population movement and general unrest throughout the region. It was in this context that we must see the establishment of the Khalifas at Mao. The first, Dala Afuno, is credited with legendary exploits as a 'So' killer but the names of his later adversaries indicate a concern with re-establishing royal authority over the disturbed areas.<sup>62</sup>

The alliance with Tripoli in spite of the failure of the Ottomans to provide the aid required by Mai Idris was continued and renewed at frequent intervals—Turkish invasions of Fezzan always prompted missions from Borno.<sup>63</sup> Relations were particularly good at the time of the powerful Saqizli Basha (c. 1634-72). The security of the route to the north was a continued source of worry to the Mai. The suggestion of Muhammad Saqizli that 'Umar b. Idris and Sultan Muhammad of the Fezzan should join him in establishing a monopoly of trade of the Fezzan was seized with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, however, it was found to be impossible to maintain for more than a few short years.

'Ali b. 'Umar's coldness towards the Tripoli ambassador sent to congratulate him on his accession was taken as a slight and an abortive attempt was made to seize 'Ali on his return from his second *hajj*; but the route was too important and too valuable to all parties for serious differences to last. And with the appointment of 'Uthman Saqizli as Basha in c. 1652 the treaty was renewed.<sup>64</sup>

The reigns of these two rulers and in particular that of 'Ali appears to have been a time of prosperity and general security for the peoples of Borno; even the incursions of Kona and Tuareg failed to hinder the general development of the country. Islam spread and scholarship flourished. The introduction of new food crops such as maize and possibly tomatoes must have helped to provide a more varied diet and to alleviate famine. All in all, 'Ali's time was looked upon as a golden age. His propensity for frequent pilgrimages had earned him the Arabic sobriquet *Tair*, the bird, for 'the journey to Mecca was to him as a night ride'.<sup>65</sup> He died in Egypt while returning from his fifth pilgrimage.

Under his sons and grandsons the security of the metropolitan area was maintained but increasingly the northern borderlands were disturbed. In 1680, attempting to benefit by the absence of Mai 'Ali as he had in 1667 or even responding to the news of his death, Muhammad al-Mubarak sent the Kel Owi and his own *jaish* to raid the desert fringe carrying off cattle and children. A second raid c. 1685 led to the destruction of the great Islamic centre of Kalumbardu and the scattering of its community.<sup>66</sup>

62. Landeroin, D.S.M.T., (1911), p. 378ff. There seem few grounds for accepting Palmer's suggestion that the Khalifa's were first established at Mao by Idris Katagarmabe—particularly as Ibn Fartuwa fails to mention the office in his references to Kanem.

63. A comparison of Krause's 'Zur Geshichte' and the French Surgeon's *Discours* soon makes this clear.

64. Ironically the expedition was under the command of cUtigman. The Fr. Surgeon translates one of the few surviving examples of Saifawa correspondence—a 1653 letter—Mai Ali to cUthman.

65. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, III, p. 38.

66. Landeroin, D.S.M.T., (1911) p. 395ff.; Abu Abdullah Mugamma b. Tayib Abd al-Salam al-Sharif, *Nasbr al-Mathani* gives the date as 1088/1677.

In the same period the tributary state of Bagirmi proved troublesome when its sultan 'Abd-al-Qadir (c. 1680-1707) raided the frontier states of Logone and Kuseri. However, it was not Bargimi but the Kona who continued to constitute the major threat to the security of the state. North African sources continue to speak of wars with Ethiopia or the kingdom of Goulfa. It was not until the early 18th century in the reign of al-Hajj Dunama b. 'Ali (c. 1699-1717), 'the warrior who suppressed robbery, of renowned fame',<sup>67</sup> that this problem was resolved. Again we are dependent upon North African sources which reported in 1706 that peace negotiations were being carried on between the belligerents in Birni Gazargamu. We do not know whether these particular talks were successful but it is significant that there are no more references to conflicts between the two states.

### The Early 18th Century: Maintenance of the status quo

With the death of Dunama the age of expansion and consolidation came to an end. In the period that followed, dynamic leadership was lacking but Borno did not stagnate under weak rulers as has often been implied. Rather the arts of peace were able to flourish as a consequence of the sound administration established in the 17th century. Agades continued to be troublesome but the well-tryed principle of strong buffer states did much to hold the Tuareg in check. Muniyo grew in strength, the new state of Damagaram to the west, founded by a refugee cleric from Kalambardu, provided further security,<sup>68</sup> while at Gaskeru, east of Muniyo, the main body of Kalambardu refugees established what was to become a theocratic state under the patronage of the mais. The last buffer to be founded was Tunbi c. 1750 under the protection of the Machena thus completing the zone of tributaries extending in a protective arc along the western and northern borders of the metropolitan area.

Elsewhere in the Caliphal lands, police actions against dissident vassals were the only form of military activity. The Mandara War from which many historians have dated Borno's final decline was not an isolated event but the last and apparently most successful of a series of revolts—'Ali b. 'Umar had fought in Mandara c. 1656 but serious trouble only arose in the time of al-Hajj Hamdun b. Dunama (c. 1717-31). The cause of the revolts can possibly be traced to the conversion of the rulers of Mandara to Islam as well as the building of a new capital in a more inaccessible position in the hills where Borno's cavalry was at a disadvantage. Muhammad b. Hamdun also fought against them and their allegiance seems to have depended to a considerable extent upon the proximity of the Borno army. It was Muhammad who also besieged Kano some time between 1731 and 1735—again a police action to restore the *status quo*, in this case to prevent Kano from upsetting the balance of power by importing guns from the coast, a situation which must have been beyond the means of the Galadima to control.<sup>69</sup>

It was in the course of the long reign of 'Ali b. Dunama (c. 1750-91) that cracks began to appear in the structure of the Caliphate: a certain lack of flexibility, a hardening of the administrative and military arteries made themselves felt but it is

67. Palmer, *BSS*, p. 252.

68. A Salifou, *Le Damagaram ou Sultanat de Zinde aux XIXe siècle*, Niamey, (1971), pp. 37ff.

69. Palmer, *S.M. III*, pp. 123-4 (trans., Kano Chronicle); The Chronicle says it was a Mai c'Ali, but *BSS*, p. 253 makes it clear it was Mai Muhammad.

perhaps advisable to digress at this point and survey such topics as, administration, and economic organization which achieved their classical form in the 18th century, the form in which they are remembered in oral traditions.

### Economic Organization

The pre-Kanuri inhabitants of Borno were sedentary agriculturists who supplemented their diet by hunting, fishing and gathering. The newcomers also practised agriculture but they contained a considerable nomadic element. As time passed many of them lost their pastoral habits and became farmers. Their economic niche was filled by new pastoral groups—Fulani from the northwest and west, Tubu from the north and northeast and later Shuwa Arabs from the east. The camel-owning pastoralists played an important military and economic role in the kingdom, providing transport for raid and trade.

Recent botanical studies have shown that Borno was distinguished from the rest of northern Nigeria by its peculiar cultigens; that while the farmers cultivated crops common to most of the savannah lands—sorghums, millets, pulses, etc., the specific varieties were unique to the area.<sup>70</sup> Exotic cereals were also introduced. *Masara*, (flint maize) was most probably introduced in the late 16th or early 17th century, at a time when contacts with Egypt seem to have been strong. Wheat, essentially a luxury crop, was grown on special farms in the Komadugu valley. In the 19th century irrigated farms worked by slaves were farmed along the river banks to provide the courtiers of Kukawa with fruit and vegetables.<sup>71</sup> Certainly similar irrigated farms were in existence in the 17th and 18th centuries providing pomegranates, figs, lemons and limes to the capital. The fruits of semi-domesticated plants and trees from the bush were brought in from the south-west.<sup>72</sup>

Agricultural and sylvan products were generally consumed locally, but a considerable trade in grains and dried fish was carried on, supplying the needs of the larger cities and of the people of the desert fringe. If, as it would seem, the metropolitan provinces were self-sufficient in foodstuffs they were deficient in minerals except for various salts. Iron was available but was of a poor quality, necessitating the importation of finished products or of pig-iron. In the 16th century it was reported that at the Kotoko town of Quamaco 'there is a great trade in iron which is brought from Mand[a]ra'.<sup>73</sup> This trade continued to flourish into the 19th century when, if not earlier, it was supplemented by unfinished tools, etc. from Shira in the west.<sup>74</sup> High quality iron in bars was also brought across the Sahara. Tin and *kohli* (antimony or

70. W.R. Stanton, 'Analysis of the present distribution of varietal variation in maize, sorghum, and cow pea in Nigeria as an aid to the study of tribal movement', *Jr. Afr. Hist.*, III, 2 (1962) pp. 251-262.

71. J.R. Patterson 'Special Report on Geiden District, Bornu Emirate, Bornu Province', NAK, SNP.609p/1918.

72. S. Koelle, *African Native Literature*, London, 1954, reprint Graz, 1968. (cited as ANL), 412.

73. D. Denham, H. Clappertin & W. Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa*, 3rd edn., London, (1828) II, p. 176.

74. P. Masson, *Histoire des établissements et du commerce français dans l'Afrique barbaresque, 1560-1793*, Paris, (1903) pp. 178-9.



lead sulphide) was imported from the plateau and Wase areas, while the trans-Saharan trade in copper and brass—in the form of finished products, were bars and in sheets is attested from the 17th century. Almost certainly much of this was re-exported southward to supply the brass industries of Fombina.

In the time of the Caliphate, Birni was an important centre of the gold trade. Leo Africanus implies that gold was plentiful as early as the reign of Idris Katagarmabe and by the 17th century gold dust and ingots were being exported from both Hausaland and Borno. While small quantities might have been obtained from the Upper Shari and from Zamfara, the greater part must have been obtained through the medium of the 'Gonja' trade.<sup>75</sup>

Birni Gazargamu was one of the major entrepôts of the trans-Saharan trade; a large community of foreign merchants lived near the palace in a special quarter called Wasiliram, handling such commodities as slaves, ivory, ostrich feathers, leather and gold dust. Slaves were gathered by means of trade tribute rather than direct military action, although major campaigns always yielded large numbers of captives. Ivory was obtained within Borno although in the 18th century Kanuri hunter-traders opened up and exploited Fombina, while ostrich feathers were gathered from the nomads and from ostrich farmers. A staple of the trans-Saharan commerce, and one frequently ignored, was the trade in hides. In 1852 it was reported that from Borno 'there set out every year merchants who carry such quantities of the best cordovan (leather) that it is counted a great thing in the Fezzan and from where they return with infinite (numbers) of horses for their country. In return for its exports Borno sought "the manufactured goods of Europe"<sup>76</sup> and the Middle East: cloth of varying quality from France and the Greek Islands in the 17th and early 18th centuries and from England thereafter, caps, perfumes, metals, armaments, chain-mail, swords, firearms, and horses.

The continued references to horses are explained in a 16th century source: "When the sun enters the sign of Leo (i.e. the rainy season) many die each year." Imported horses were necessary for improvement of blood-stock but were particularly susceptible to the ravages of tsetse. So important did the rulers of Borno regard the horse trade that the Tura Bani Mukhtar, hereditary royal traders of Borno, had special privileges in return for bringing horses from the north. This north-south trade must not be allowed to obscure the fact that large numbers must also have come from the Nile valley, for today the distinguishing characteristics of Borno horses are Dongolan. By the 18th century such horses were exported to Nupe and perhaps Oyo. In addition to horses, the large Egyptian donkey came this way, through Darfur, while cloth—both imported and of local manufacture—was carried together with choice slaves as far as Darfur, and Sennar from at least as early as the 17th century.<sup>77</sup>

'Gonja' trade which according to the *Kano Chronicle* began in the 15th century was certainly flourishing by the 18th century when the gold and kola of the Ashanti region were exchanged for manufactured goods from North Africa together with indigo dyed

75. Anania in Lange (1971).

77. The transverse Sudanic trade was well established by the late 17th century (P. Krump. *Hober und Fruchtbarer Palm Baum dass Heiligen Evangelische Angspurg*, (1710). Gray, (Christian Traces) points out the Bornu Mission originally tried to reach their destination via Sennar.

cloth, onions and, most important of all, *kanwa*, the potash of Borno which was also exported to Yoruba and the Benue valley. This trade was in the hands of people of Mande or Kanuri origin, and it was not until the 19th century that the 'Hausa' began to enter the trade in large numbers.

Until the mid-18th century Borno controlled the important salt deposits of Bilma whence Borno and Hausaland derived most of their salt. The transportation of this commodity was divided between the Tuareg of Abzin and the Tubu. However, after c. 1759 while the trade continued as before, political control of the deposits passed to the Sultan of Agades.

As we have seen in North Africa, 'Barbary' merchants, Moors, were engaged in the trans-Saharan trade; but while Tunis and Tripoli were the main northern termini their merchants were supplemented by numbers of Egyptians and Moroccans together with representatives of the Saharan trading centres, Tuat, Ghadames and Fezzan. The inhabitants of Borno, 'the Borno' or 'Bonoese' were themselves involved, apparently from early times. The Fezzan was a popular point of exchange and only relatively few merchants of any origin passed beyond in either direction. However, the Turkish traveller Celebe in the 1670s reported the presence of Borno merchants 'who come to Egypt every year . . . bringing with them gold dusts.'<sup>78</sup>

The Caliphate authorities, unlike for example their contemporaries in Wadai, interfered very little with trade; generally their role was restricted to providing security. Ibn Fartuwa's emphasis upon the duties of a Muslim ruler is significant in this respect. The Mais were active in promoting and encouraging commerce from as early as the 15th century, witness the letter to the *murabitun* of Tuat<sup>79</sup> and the series of commercial missions to successive powers in northern Africa. The need for European foods led to missions to the Spaniards in Tripoli in 1512, to Khayr al-Din Babarossa, to the Knights of Malta and to the Ottoman Bashas of Tripoli.<sup>80</sup>

### The Crisis of the Late 18th Century

The long reign of 'Ali b. Dunama (c. 1750-91) was a time of considerable unrest expressed in population movements that brought about a considerable change in demographic patterns. The population of Borno on the eve of the *jihad* can be conveniently divided into two language-speaking groups: Central Saharan and Afro-Asiatic.

The Central Saharan speakers include the Kanuri, but to define a Kanuri is often impossible. All would agree that the Magumi fall into that category together with the Ngalma Dukk but after that there is much disagreement. The term Kanuri itself is first found in an 18th century source,<sup>81</sup> and it is possible that it only came into use in the late 16th or 17th century. Indeed, Kanuri as a distinct language probably only came into existence after the immigrants from Kanem settled and intermarried with the original Chadic-speaking inhabitants of Borno. The number of clans or sub-tribes

78. T. Giecińska-Chlapawa, loc. cit.

79. A.G.P. Martin, *Les oases sahariennes*, Algiers (1908) p. 122.

80. The French surgeon, *Discours*.

81. In a satirical poem by Muhammad al-Tahir b. Ibrahim al-Fallati (d. 1776) quoted by Bello IM (Al-Hajj's trans.) The Kanuri are an oppressive and arrogant people. Lies to them are like the songs of praise.

that are common to Kanuri, Kanemu and Teda underscores the problem of definition.

As we have said, the speakers of Chadic languages were the original inhabitants of the Borno area most of whom were either assimilated or driven away to the marsh areas where many formed small states that later came under the protection of the Mais. The Kotoko peoples south of Lake Chad have retained their languages and customs while being strongly influenced by Kanuri culture. The Bedde Ngizim peoples who were almost certainly driven up the Komadugu by the immigrants from Kanem left representatives near the shores of Chad in towns such as Arege. The main body became separated into the Beddes and Ngizims, most of the former settling in the inaccessible swamps south of Nguru. Others came under the control of the mais and those accepting Islam became known as Margede.<sup>82</sup> Many such groups were assimilated as Islamization and Kanurization tended to proceed simultaneously.

The Arab groups came in two waves: those who followed the Saifawa in their move to Borno—it is generally reckoned that there are five tribes who followed the Mais who came soon after in the 16th century—the Mai'in, the Sarajiyye, Juwama Bakariyye and Bani Malik.<sup>83</sup> Today, most representatives of these groups are indistinguishable from their Kanuri neighbours. Most are sedentary farmers and have ceased to speak Arabic.

Those tribes immediately recognizable as cattle Arabs—Baqqara in the Sudan, Shuwa in Borno—came in in the late 18th and early 19th century and have generally maintained their identity. Most of them are sub-sections of tribes found also near Bagirmi and Wadai.

The last group of significance are the Fulani or Fellata as they are known in Borno. The early history of their movements from the west is obscure. It is sufficient for us to note that they must have been present in Borno by the 15th century since by the beginning of the sixteenth they were to be found in considerable numbers in Bagirmi and played a role in the foundation of that state. By the end of that century they were grazing their herds in the so-called Great Forest area. By the later 17th century there are records of their presence near Birmi and by the 18th century, if not much earlier, they were grazing on the shores of Lake Chad. It must have been in the late 17th and early 18th century that the first parties moved south to the slopes of the Mandara hills and the plains of Kilba, before pushing on into Fombina along routes pioneered by Borno ivory traders. By the late 19th century the main concentrations were on the shores of Lake Chad, and in the Damaturu area in the west. But the greatest number seem to have been in the area known in North Africa as Dar Fellata which, from the context, can only be identified with the Kilba area.<sup>84</sup>

So, then, we are faced with a situation in which the best grazing areas of Borno are occupied by Fulani. There is a certain tension between the court and the Fulani scholars. This is the very time that Kanembu and Shuwa groups—themselves pastoralists—begin moving in. The Kanembu as a result of conditions in Kanem moved north of the Lake and began to settle along its western shores. The Shuwa, many fleeing from Muhammad al-Amin of Bagirmi, grazed their cattle on the south-

82. J.R. Patterson 'Assessment Report on Borsari District'.

83. J.R. Patterson, 'Special Report on Uje District'. J.C. Zeltner, 'Histoire des Arabes sur les rives du lac Tchad', *Ann l'Universite d'Abidjan*, ser F. 2, 2 (1970) pp. 109-237.

84. U.J. Seetzen, loc. cit.

western shores of Lake Chad. Both groups were well received and were probably favoured over the Fulani.

Other significant movements occurred at this time. We have observed the southward drift of the Manga Kanuri. Under Tuareg pressure the refugees moved into Tunbi, pressing on into the Hausa-speaking area, into the eastern part of the Sosebaki state, reinforcing their relatives in Machena and Nguru and beginning a movement into the province of Gazir that has today turned it into a predominantly Manga region.<sup>85</sup>

Much of western Gazir was populated by Ngizims who began to move down the banks of the Komadugu Gana late in the century, some settling to the south of the Bedde, others settling around Potiskum before 1800 where they met the Kerikeri who were expanding westwards. The Ngizim migration cannot be unconnected with the move of the Manga into western Gazir.

In the case of the last fifty years of the 18th century important demographic changes occurred within the metropolitan area engendering a general feeling of insecurity and distrust of the government. The stability of the government was affected by unrest in many of the vassal states. The installation of 'Ali b. Dunama was followed by an expedition against Bedde, presumably because of their propensity for caravan raiding, but a number of other areas quickly came to the fore as centres of dissidence. In Bagirmi *Mbang* Muhammad al-Amin (c. 1751-85) threw off Borno overlordship and launched a series of campaigns into Kanem, Logone and even into southern Borno. Wadai, under the leadership of Kolak Jawda (c. 1747-95) continued its westwards expansion which brought its frontiers to the Bahr al-Ghazal. These activities set in motion a series of migrations of Teda, Kanembu and Shuwa into Kanem and on into metropolitan Borno.<sup>86</sup>

The long-term struggle with Agades continued, leading to the loss of control of the Bilma salt deposits c. 1759. Retaliatory action by Borno brought more misfortunes as it was followed by an Abzin raid into Borno itself in which large numbers of cattle and children were seized. Sultan Muhammad Hamed of Agades was even able to exact a promise from Borno not to attack the annual salt caravans from Bilma. Information collected in 1789 suggests some revival of caliphal authority as it was reported that the Borno frontier lay only three days south of Fezzan but, significantly, it goes on to make clear that the salt trade was firmly controlled from Agades. The overall consequences of this continued raiding was the abandonment of many towns on the desert fringe and a southward shift of their mainly Manga population.

A series of revolts in the Sosekaki states at this time cannot be unrelated to these troubles, while Sarkin Gobir's decision to refuse tribute c. 1785<sup>87</sup> must surely have been taken in the light of Gobir's increasing power following her defeat of Zamfara and Borno's inability to prevent Abzin raids into the Hausa states. The fact that the other states remained loyal until their eclipse in the *jihād* suggests that a fear of Borno was balanced by a fear of Gobir. We might even go so far as to suggest that the Katsina

85. A. Abdullahi, 'A History of Gumel, (1973), J.R. Patterson, 'Special Report on Geidam District'; G.L. Lethem 'Special Report on Nguru District'.

86. Urvoy, *Chroniques d'Agades*.

87. cAbd al-Qadir b. al-Mustafa *Rawdat al-Afkar*.

wars with Gobir at this time were partially undertaken at the behest of Borno. Certainly it was a Borno policy to utilize vassals in this manner.

According to Barth, writing some sixty years after the event, 'most of the intelligent Borno people attribute the weakness of the empire to the serious defeat suffered by Borno when the best part of the army were slain by the inhabitants of Mandara'.<sup>88</sup> Palmer on unknown authority states that the Mandara assisted by Fulani and Shuwa, who had settled there in large numbers, defeated the Kaigama.<sup>89</sup> It is probable that there were at least two campaigns, the first in which the Kaigama was defeated and the second c 1781 led by Mai 'Ali in which the bulk of the army was routed and the Mai abandoned him to his fate. It is salutary to note that the Fulani turned against the ruler of Mandara some years later and he was forced to call on Borno for aid.

The storm broke in the reign of Ahmad b. 'Ali (c. 1791-1808). The earlier part of his reign saw a continuation of what might be called traditional troubles—Bedde and Ngizim raids, Tuareg attacks culminating in the destruction of the theocratic state of Gaskeru about 1800, unrest east of Lake Chad and trouble on the southern frontier. But by the beginning of the 19th century a new problem emerged in the form of Fulani discontent in the western and southern parts of the empire. In 1805 the ruler of the province of Daya revolted and defeated two armies sent against him. He was encouraged in his revolt by the local Fulani in the Great Forest region—probably under the particular stimulus of the clerics of the Wurobkki scholar community.

Since the scholar communities around the frontiers of Borno were predominantly Fulani, it was natural that they should keep in touch with developments elsewhere and should be fully aware of the ideas emanating from the Gobir region. Already scholar adventurers such as Buba Yero, who began his activities in the 1790s, were building up military forces on the frontiers of the caliphate, while Goni Mukhtar encouraged the revolt in Daya.<sup>90</sup> When after 1805/1806 the rulers of the Hausa states called upon their overlord to fulfil the commitments implied in the client-patron relationship, the Fulani communities felt free to act. The Borno army was unable to cope with the situation, the army was defeated, and the Galadima was killed in battle in western Borno.

In the south the pastoral Fulani around Daya under the leadership of Goni Mukhtar united with Buba Yero and the combined force defeated elements of the Borno army at Kalalewa. Advancing through the Great Forest and the province of Gazir they eliminated the last resistance and entered the gates of Birni Garzargamu from the west as Mai Ahmad, who had gone blind, fled from the east with his son and the Magira. Although the Saifawa dynasty continued to rule until 1846, their time as independent rulers was at an end. Their future lay in the hands of a Kanembu mallam, Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi.

88. Barth, loc. cit.

89. Palmer, *BSS*, p. 255.

90. Al-Hajj Ahmad b. Al-Hajj Amir Barnu, *Akkbar*.



## HISTORY OF ISLAM UP TO 1800

S. A. BALOGUN

Islam which, to Muslims, means total submission to the will of Allah, was preached and spread by Prophet Muhammad in Arabia early in the seventh century. The religion was spread to North Africa during the caliphate of 'Umar b. al-Khattab (634-644), the second successor of Prophet Muhammad as the religious and political head of the Muslim community.

Since West Africa had established trade links with North Africa before this time, the advent of Islam in North Africa was bound to affect West Africa. Among others, two important caravan routes connected North Africa with West Africa in this early period. To the West was the Sijilmasa to Awdaghast route through Taghaza which linked the area of Morocco with ancient Ghana; and to the east was the Tripoli to Kanem route which passed through Fezzan and Bilma. It seems that Islam first reached West Africa through the Muslim merchants who used these caravan routes. We are told that by the end of the seventh century, Muslim traders from North African areas of present-day Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco were attending Western Sudan markets.<sup>1</sup>

Among the areas of West Africa into which Islam was early introduced is Kanem-Borno, some territory of which now forms part of present-day Nigeria. Complex communication systems on land and water connected several areas which later came to be known as Nigeria. It is difficult for the present writer to date the existence of some of the long and short trade routes which provided links between several communities and trading centres of present-day Nigeria. Whereas it can be suggested that movements between Kanem-Borno and Hausaland apparently became more frequent with the transfer of Borno headquarters from the east to the west of Lake Chad, it is difficult to say, as of now, that contacts between the two areas began only in the late fourteenth century when the transfer took place. Islam may also have come via the Niger-Benue water-way which was a major carrier of trade.

At this point, it may be observed that an attempt to discuss Islam in Nigeria before the nineteenth century generally faces a major problem of scarce source material. This is unlike the post-1800 era of Islam which is fairly well, if not evenly, documented throughout the country. However, there are some sources in Arabic which were written by alien travellers and indigenous Muslim scholars. There are other accounts

1. J.S. Trimingham, *History of Islam in West Africa* (Oxford University Press, 1962) p. 22.

compiled by European explorers, merchants and colonial administrators, which give some information especially for the later part of the period under discussion. But these sources generally only give scanty information, leaving vital gaps in our knowledge of the various parts of the country and in the details and chronology of events. The contribution of oral tradition to our understanding of the history of Islam in this early period of present-day Nigeria is also marginal.

### Islam in Kanem-Borno

Considering our present-state of knowledge, it is difficult to date precisely the advent of Islam in the areas of present-day Nigeria. It seems that the earliest indication of the possibility of Islamic influence is the reference to a Muslim party led by Uqba b. Nafi in about 666, which raided into the area of Kawar on the caravan route to Kanem.<sup>2</sup> Since trade on this route continued, it is possible that Islamic influence penetrated into the area of Kanem in the early decades of Islam. Al-Bakri in 1067 mentioned the presence in Kanem of the descendants some Ummayyad refugees.<sup>3</sup> But it was not until the late eleventh century, according to Borno records, that Humai, son of Selemma, is said to have reigned as the first Muslim ruler in Kanem-Borno.<sup>4</sup>

It is quite possible, however, that Islamic influence could have been established in Kanem-Borno before the reign of Mai Humai. If examined closely, the Borno *Mahram* which specifically mentions Humai as the first Muslim ruler is also capable of being understood as suggesting the presence of Islam in the area before the reign of Humai. For instance, the *Mahram* suggests that one Muhammad ibn Mani from Fezzan introduced Islam into Kanem-Borno. But this same Ibn Mani is reported by the same source to have lived in Kanem during the three reigns (of Mai Bulu, Mai Arki and Mai Kadia Hawani) which preceded that of Humai. And each of the three predecessors of Humai is reported to have learnt various parts of the Qur'an from Muhammad ibn Mani. In this early period of Islam, the study of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts was usually associated with the profession of Islam. Normally it was only the Muslims who learnt to read and recite the Qur'an to enable them to fulfil certain religious obligations such as performing ritual prayers. Probably there were other Muslim rulers before Mai Humai. It may well be that what distinguished Humai was his greater knowledge of the Qur'an and other related Islamic texts. For instance, whereas his predecessors are reported to have learnt only sections of the Qur'an, Mai Humai is said to have learnt the whole Qur'an and studied the *Risala*—a popular Maliki text on *Fiqh* (Islamic Law). It was also during the reign of Mai Humai that Islam began to spread to the general public. Before then, the acceptance of Islam was largely confined to the ruling group.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, it may be unreliable to date the advent of Islam with the conversion of the first Muslim ruler even where such a ruler could be correctly identified. To do this is to assume that the first Muslim ruler in an area was necessarily the first Muslim. Often,

2. Abdullahi Smith, "The early states of the Central Sudan" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.) *History of West Africa* (Longman, 1971) Vol. 1, p. 171.

3. Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives, An Historical Anthology* (Oxford University Press 1960) pp. 67-68.

4. H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs* (Lagos Government Printer, 1928) Vol. III, p. 3.

5. *Ibid.*

this was not so. Although Islam was initially introduced by Muslim aliens who needed the support and protection of the ruler who, therefore, had to deal with the court, these Muslims aliens were also merchants who had to transact business with rich traders outside the royal court. In this latter case, the first Muslims could be ordinary traders whose conversion to Islam might not be considered significant enough to merit keeping a special record of. But the conversion of a ruler was usually seen as a major achievement and a landmark in the history of the group; hence it was generally recorded or its remembrance kept alive for a long time. It is possible, therefore, that before its first Muslim ruler, Kanem-Borno had its colonies of alien Muslims as traders and itinerant scholars and preachers.

In any case, it is fairly clear that from the late eleventh century the rulers of Kanem-Borno generally paid attention to their practice of Islam. Dunama who succeeded Humai performed the pilgrimage twice and got drowned in the Red Sea during his journey for the third *hajj*.<sup>6</sup> Other rulers were either learned scholars, such as Mai Biri,<sup>7</sup> or pious and generous Muslims such as Selemma, grandson of Biri, who engaged in mosque building and giving material comfort to the 'ulama.'<sup>8</sup> Probably, it was Dunama Dibbalemi who established a hostel in Cairo for the welfare of Sudanese students and pilgrims.<sup>9</sup> The suggestion by Al-Maqrizi that Mai Dunama Dibbalemi of the mid-thirteenth century was the first ruler of Kanem-Borno to be converted to Islam could not have been based on accurate information. Not only was Al-Maqrizi writing much later, he could also have been carried away by the fact that the international fame of Dunama Dibbalemi exceeded that of any of his predecessors.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that the rulers of Kanem-Borno, were early committed to the cause of Islam. This early commitment by the rulers and the patronage given to the religion through the granting of privileges to Muslim scholars and leaders eventually led to the development in Borno of a strong Islamic tradition. This tradition became manifest in the growth of Borno as a major centre of Islamic learning in West Africa and also in the application of Islamic principles to the conduct of government.

The *Mahrams* testify to the generosity of Borno rulers to the Muslim scholars and clerics. This generosity had the effect of providing the basic material comfort which made it possible for education to be pursued as a full-time business. Full-time scholars with the patronage of the rulers, devoted themselves to learning and rendering services to the rulers as Muslim leaders and administrators. We are told, for instance, that Islamic offices of state such as those of the *Imam*, the *Qadi*, the *Wazir*, the treasurer and the chief of police were established as early as the reign of Mai Selemma (c. 1194-1221).<sup>11</sup> Ali Gaji (c. 1472-1504) was advised, among others, by his Chief *Qadi*, Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Kuwata and the Masbarma, 'Umar b. 'Uthman—a sound scholar

6. Imam Ahmad Ibn Fartua, (translated by H.R. Palmer) *History of the first twelve years of the reign of Mai Idris Alooma of Bornu* (The Government Printer, Lagos, 1926) pp. 85-6.

7. Abdullahi Smith, "The early states of the Central Sudan in J.F. ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, *History of West Africa* (Longman, 1971) Vol. 1, p. 172.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.* p. 173.

10. *Ibid.* p. 172.

11. John E. Lavers, "Islam in the Bornu Caliphate: A Survey", *Odu: A Journal of West African Studies*, New series No. 5, April 1971 p. 29.

and teacher, who studied under Shaikh Ahmad Fatimi in Masina. The scholar and teacher also served the son of Ali Gaji—Ibrahim Katagarmbe—as adviser and chronicler.<sup>12</sup> It was as the Chief of Imam of Mai Idris Alooma that Ahmad b. Fartuwa compiled an account of the ruler's activities, especially his wars and battles. Apart from possible earlier isolated cases, it is known that from the time of Mai Ali Gaji, all the rulers of Borno bore the title of Caliph (*Amir al-Mu'minn*)<sup>13</sup>

Borno had a high international reputation for Islamic learning. It was particularly famous for the specialised knowledge of its scholars in *tafsir*.<sup>14</sup> This specialisation brought into Borno several learned scholars and students from the Niger-Chad region.<sup>15</sup> Many scholars from Borno later migrated into Hausaland and became instrumental to the establishment of a similar Islamic tradition in the area and further south.<sup>16</sup>

### Islam in Hausaland

It would appear that the next area in present-day Nigeria to which Islam spread is Hausaland. The introduction of Islam into this area is generally associated with the coming of the Wangarawa—a group of Mande Dyula Muslim merchants and clerics from Mali. The *Kano Chronicle*<sup>17</sup> puts the advent in Kano of the Wangarawa and the introduction of Islam in the reign of Sarkin Kano Yaji (1349-1385). According to this document, the Muslim immigrants preached Islam to the Sarki who accepted and built a mosque. The Sarki also appointed several of the Muslim immigrants to offices associated with the practice of Islam. These included the posts of the *Imam*, the *Muezzin*, and an official responsible for slaughtering animals. In addition, Sarkin Kano Yaji ordered all in his state to accept Islam. But a certain chief opposed Islam, and continued to defile the mosque. The story goes further that, as an eloquent testimony to the superior power of Islam, the stubborn chief was rendered blind by the effect of prayers offered by the Muslims.

The story seems to have epitomized a series of activities including a protracted struggle between the adherents of Hausa traditional religion, on the one hand, and the converts to Islam on the other. These activities and the struggle may not have taken place within a single reign as this account appears to suggest. If Islam had become so consolidated during the reign of Yaji how do we explain the non-profession of the faith by his son and second successor—Sarkin Kano Kanajeji (1390-1410) who is described in the *Kano Chronicle* as a "pagan"? Is it possible that Hausaland was completely closed to Islamic influence until the arrival of the Wangarawa even though Islam had been spreading in Kanem-Borno not later than the eleventh century?

Information from a seventeenth century Arabic document on the Wangarawa—*Asl al-Wangariyin*<sup>18</sup>—can throw some light on some of these questions. The

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.* pp. 30 and 32.

14. *Ibid.* p. 36. *Tafsir* is explanation and interpretation of the Qur'an.

15. *Ibid.* p. 35.

16. See pp. 18, 19, 21.

17. H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs op. cit.* pp. 92-132.

18. Muhammad Al-Hajj, "A seventeenth century chronicle on the Origins and Missionary Activities of the Wangarawa", *Kano Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 4, 1968. pp. 7-42.

document, dated 1061 A.H. (1650/51 A.D.) identifies Rumfa as the Sarkin Kano when the Wangarawa, led by 'Abd al-Rahman Zagaite, arrived. Rumfa, according to Palmer's dating of the reigns of the rulers of Kano in the *Kano Chronicle*, occupied the throne c. 1463-1499. If Islam was introduced during the reign of Yaji, it may have been through agents other than the Wangarawa referred to in *Asl al-Wangariyin*. And it is quite reasonable to suggest that Islam could have been introduced and accepted in some form in Hausaland before the arrival of the Wangara group of the fifteenth century. Although constant contact between Hausaland and Kanem-Borno could have been hampered by Lake Chad until the late fourteenth century when the Sefawa dynasty moved its headquarters from the east to the west of the lake, it is difficult to imagine that Hausaland was completely isolated from Kanem-Borno even before the transfer of the Borno capital.

It would appear that Muslim traders from the west were already in Hausaland before the Muslim scholars and clerics of the fifteenth century described in *Asl al-Wangariyin*. It is possible, therefore, that Hausaland received several waves of Wangara Muslim-traders and scholars missionaries respectively—at different times. The earlier wave of Wangara traders could have succeeded in spreading Islam in Hausaland, especially among Hausa traders and a few of the ruling elite, before the advent of the Wangarawa who were immigrant Muslim scholars and missionaries who later helped to establish a strong and more widespread Islamic tradition.

This impression is further strengthened by the suggestion in *Asl al-Wangariyin* that the visit to Kano of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim b. Muhammad al-Maghili, the celebrated North Muslim scholar and theologian, coincided with the arrival of the Wangarawa in the city. Al-Maghili visited Kano about 1492. But the circumstances in which he left North Africa were not auspicious. After his attack on the Jews of Touat he had to flee when another attack on the ruling Bami Wattas failed.<sup>19</sup> In such circumstances, Al-Maghili would reasonably enquire about his subsequent places of abode. He was able to find out about Hausaland from Air and Takidda which he visited before going to Hausaland.<sup>20</sup> If Al-Maghili was compelled to leave Air because of his intolerant attitude to nominal Muslims there,<sup>21</sup> he would have had to be assured of a more congenial Muslim atmosphere in Hausaland before he decided to go there. In fact, Al-Maghili was in correspondence with Sarkin Kano Muhammad Rumfa in 1491-2 before he shortly afterwards visited Kano.<sup>22</sup> I therefore agree with Muhammad Al-Hajj that Islam was widely known in Hausaland before the fifteenth century even though, at that point of time, it remained largely a religion of the ruling elite while the masses for the most part stuck to their traditional religion.<sup>23</sup> A record of earlier conversion to Islam might not survive since the Muslim merchants who probably carried it out might have been indifferent to keeping any records, especially if the

19. 'Abd-al-Aziz 'Abd-Allah Batran, "A contribution to the biography of Shaikh Muhammad Ibn 'Abd-al-Karim Ibn Muhammad (Umar-A 'Mar) al-Maghili" *Journal of African History*. XIV., 3, 1973, p. 390.

20. *Ibid.* p. 391.

21. *Ibid.* p. 390.

22. J.O. Hunwick, "Songhay, Bornu and Hausaland in the sixteenth century", in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.) *History of West Africa*. Vol. 1, (Longman, 1971) p. 216.

23. Muhammad A. Al-Hajj, *Kano Studies*. *op. cit.* p. 8.



converts were non-royal. The situation would change when Muslim scholars and clerics as itinerant preachers and teachers emerged. Unlike traders, Muslim scholars and clerics took preaching, teaching and writing as full-time business. For material support, some of them depended more on the ruler with whose court they might be closely associated as advisers, administrators, charm makers, and sometimes, diplomats.

Notwithstanding the suggestion that Islam must have been introduced into Hausaland much earlier, it would appear that it was in the fifteenth century that a strong Islamic tradition began to be established, especially in Kano and Katsina. It was not only the Wangara Muslim scholars clerics that arrived, the Muslim Fulani with books of law and theology also immigrated, some of them staying in Hausaland while others continued their journey to settle in Borno.<sup>24</sup> About 1487, Ahmad b. 'Umar b. Muhammad Aqit of Timbuktu, the great-great-grandfather of the celebrated Ahmad Baba, was reported to have stayed and taught in Kano.<sup>25</sup> It was the same fifteenth century (about 1492-4) that Muhammad al-Maghili visited Kano and Katsina; at the request of Sarkin Kano, Muhammad Rumfa, Al-Maghili wrote the Obligations of Princes, apparently to guide the Sarkin Kano in his administration as a Muslim ruler.

Some details of the activities of Sarki Muhammad Rumfa indicate that Islam was spreading and becoming increasingly influential in Kano by the end of the fifteenth century. He built mosques on the site where the sacred tree, a symbol of traditional religion, was cut down, and converted into a market *Kurmin Jakara*—a wooded shrine similarly associated with traditional religion in Kano.<sup>26</sup>

In Katsina, Sarki Muhammad Korau, probably a contemporary of Rumfa, is reported to have been the first Muslim ruler of the state. His successor, Ibrahim Sura (c. 1493-8) is said to have been so active a Muslim ruler that his name was mentioned by Al-Suyuti in his letter addressed to the rulers of the Sudan. And the third Sarkin Katsina, 'Ali (c. 1498-1524) was such a devoted Muslim ruler and reformer that he was given the honorific title Murabus (al-Murabit). It was during the reign of Ali Murabus that Aida Ahmad of Tazakht (c. 1529-30) settled in Katsina after performing a pilgrimage to Mecca during which he studied there and in Cairo. Ahmad was appointed *Qadi* of Katsina.<sup>27</sup>

Both in Kano and Katsina, as readily observed in Kanem-Borno, the royal patronage given to Islam through rulers' generosity to Muslim scholars, teachers and preachers, ensured the emergence of a strong core of *Ulama*. This learned group, consisting of both alien immigrant and indigenous scholars, ably assisted by other Muslim traders, saw to it that Islam continued to spread steadily into various parts of the areas. It seems that Islam was growing fairly steadily even though its political influence varied according to the degree of commitment to it by the rulers and their differing circumstances. There is hardly any doubt, for instance, that the practice of Islam was always mixed, in varying degrees, with customs and practices associated with

24. H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*. Vol. III *op. cit.* p. 111.

25. J.O. Hunwick, "Songhay, Bornu and Hausaland in the sixteenth century". *op. cit.* p. 216.  
A.D.H. Bivar and M. Kiskert, "The Arabic literature of Nigeria to 1804: A provisional account", *Bulletin, School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXV, 1962, pp. 109-110.

26. Abdullahi Smith, "The early states . . ." *op. cit.* p. 198.

27. J.O. Hunwick "Songhay, Bornu and Hausaland . . ." *op. cit.* p. 213.

traditional religions in the different areas of present-day Nigeria under discussion. But, by and large, it seems that the Islamic tradition was quite strong in Borno and such Hausa states as Kano, Katsina, and probably Gobir and Zazzau. By the end of the eighteenth century, Islamic tradition was stronger in these areas than in Kebbi, Yawuri and Yorubaland.

Apart from the possibility that Islam began to gain adherents at different points of time in Kebbi and Yawuri, there are similarities in the nature and character of the Islamic tradition which came to be established in these two areas by the end of our period. In both places Muslims remained a negligible minority and the majority of those who professed Islam associated with it traditional religious practices. In effect, Islamic tradition in the two areas was relatively weak.

According to a study on Kebbi,<sup>28</sup> the first Sarkin Kebbi, Muhammad Kanta, and some of his chiefs (*sarakuna*) accepted Islam. Kanta is believed to have reigned about 1516-1554. As a former military leader under Askia Al-Hajj Muhammad Ture of Songhai, Muhammad Kanta could have been exposed to Islamic influence. And although some of his successors might be adherents of traditional religion (*tsafi*) Islam was generally tolerated, because the mallams were negligibly few and considered harmless. Most of the Muslims were aliens, especially the Fulani and traders. And the Muslim leaders among them tolerated so much mixture of Islam and *tsafi* that both religions were no longer mutually exclusive, hence none constituted a threat to the other. The majority of the Kebbawa remained adherents of *tsafi*.

Although Islam was being accepted, up to the end of the eighteenth century, those who accepted Islam still constituted just a sizable minority. Not only that the acceptance of Islam by the Kebbawa did not mean the abandonment of customs and practices associated with traditional religion. Sarkin Kebbi, despite the profession of Islam, was himself the chief custodian of the sacred places of *tsafi*. He continued to propitiate spirits (*ishoki*) either personally or through the services of traditional priests. Even in the latter case, he had to provide the animals for sacrifice.

Our information on Islam in Yawuri is fragmentary. Before Abershi dan Ayi (1799-1829) of the jihad era, eight of the other preceding rulers (*sarakunam Yawuri*) bore Muslim names.<sup>29</sup> This is scarcely enough to attempt dating the advent of Islam in the state as the bearing such names might indicate no more than the presence of some form of Islamic influence in the royal court. But realizing that Yawuri was a place of call for kolanut traders on their journey between as far east as Borno, and Gonja to the west, it is possible that some of the rulers of Yawuri had indeed begun to accept Islam from about the seventeenth century or earlier. It is well known, for instance, that Muslim traders often spread Islam along their trade routes. However, up to the end of our period Islamic tradition remained weak in Yawuri. The non-Muslim forces in Yawuri, for instance, were sufficiently strong to resist the jihadists in the early years of the nineteenth century and reach, with the Muslim community of Shaikh 'Uthman b. Fodiye, an understanding which granted Yawuri a *dhimmi* status.<sup>30</sup> By this arrange-

28. M.B. Alkali, *A Hausa community in crisis: Kebbi in the nineteenth century* (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1969). pp. 120-132.

29. S.J. Hogben and A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria* (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 260.

30. When a non-Muslim state or community recognises the authority of a Muslim state and pays *jizya* in recognition of that authority, it has *dhimmi* status.

ment, Yawuri successfully resisted the imposition of Islam. And while it recognized the political authority of the Caliphate, Yawuri was left free to continue its traditional religion.

### Islam in Nupe and Yorubaland

The Nupe country was better placed than Yorubaland in terms of accessibility to Islam. As already noted, the earliest Islamic influences came with Muslim merchants. The main directions of trade were from the north to the south, and from the east to the west. Perhaps, the oldest north-south trade route which connected Kanem-Borno with North Africa was the one from Tripoli area. The other great trade routes which connected North Africa with West Africa avoided Hausaland until the fifteenth century when the Tuareg established their political domination in Agades, and thereby opened a gateway into Hausaland.<sup>31</sup>

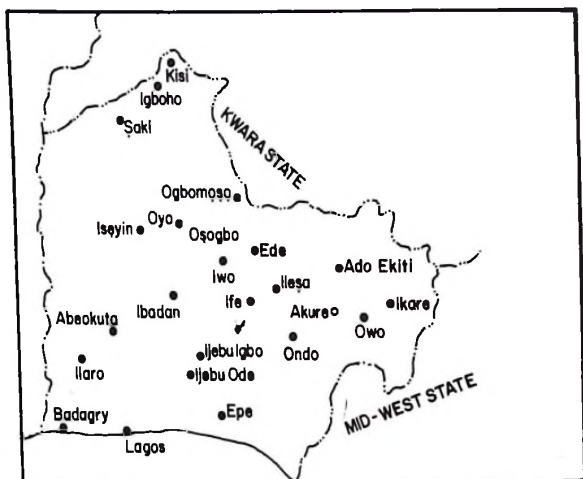
The main east to west trade route from Borno area passed through some Hausa states to Gonja. Both the north-south and east-west trade routes connected Nupe country as well. Yorubaland was connected by these routes through Borgu and Nupe. Not only did Nupe have many local industries, for instance, cloth and ivory, which provided articles of trade, the territory, north of Yoruba country, is also the transitional zone between the tsetse-fly infested forest area of the south and the non-infested savannah north. Caravan traders dreaded staying long in the tsetse-fly infested south because of the danger to which their animals of burden could be exposed. On the other hand, the Muslim traders could stay as long as they desired in the savannah north where their horses, camels and asses were relatively free from tsetse-fly attacks. The geographical location of Nupe therefore placed her at a comparative advantage as it was more accessible than Yorubaland to the Muslim traders from the north.

The advent of Islam in Nupe is difficult to date. There is some indication that by the middle of the seventeenth century some Islamic influence was present. According to the kinglist of Nupe,<sup>32</sup> the Etsu Nupe who reigned c. 1670-c. 1679 was Muhammad Wari, obviously a Muslim name. Many of the succeeding *Etsus* bore similar Muslim names, including Etsu Jibril (c. 1746-c. 1759) who was described as the first Muslim ruler by Nupe tradition. This tradition may, in fact, be suggesting that Jibril was distinguished as a more enthusiastic practising Muslim than his predecessors who could have nominally professed Islam.

As already observed, the period when the ruler was converted to Islam does not necessarily indicate when the first group of ordinary citizens accepted Islam. There have been cases when ordinary citizens as traders who had close dealings with foreign Muslim traders accepted Islam before their rulers. This was very likely in Nupe which, for centuries, had established trade contacts with Hausaland, Borno, Dendi territory, Songhai and Mali empires. The commercial activities which sustained these contacts must have exposed the Nupe masses to varying degrees of Islamic influence. How

31. Abdullahi Smith, "Some considerations relating to the formation of states in Hausaland", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. V, No. 3, December 1970 p. 332.

32. S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Nupe Kingdom in Nigeria* (Oxford University Press, 1965 Reprint) p. 406.



Islamic expansion in Yorubaland by 1980

widespread Islam was during our period is not easy to determine. It seems, however, that by the end of the eighteenth century, a strong core of Muslim adherents existed in Nupe. Definitely before the *jihād*, an '*ulama*' class of Fulani and indigenous Nupe mallams had emerged. Among the famous mallams of Nupe in the eighteenth century were Mallam Musa and 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad Sharif. According to a recorded tradition<sup>33</sup> of Nupe, Mallam Musa was initially more popular and had many more followers than Mallam Dendo of *jihād* fame.

Before he later became a *jihād* leader in Nupe, Mallam Dendo is reported to have served as one of the followers of 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad Sharif. 'Abd al-Rahman, a son of an Arab father and a Nupe mother, is reported to have been so knowledgeable in Islamic studies that when he later visited Shaikh 'Abd Allah b. Fodiye, the latter had nothing new to teach him. 'Abd al-Rahman, according to this tradition, also launched a *jihād* which failed in Nupe.<sup>34</sup> These and other mallams—members of the '*ulama*' in Nupe had become vocal in their preaching in Nupe while some others had gone further south into Yorubaland to propagate Islam.

It seems that Islam spread to Yorubaland in the seventeenth century. Although Samuel Johnson suggests that it was introduced late in the eighteenth century,<sup>35</sup> the

33. R.M. East, *Labaran Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, (Translation Breau, Zaria, 1932) Vol. 1, pp. 77-82.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Samuel Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas from the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate*. (C.M.S. Bookshops, Lagos, 1960 edition), p. 26.

circumstances under which Islam was introduced which the author describes could indicate that Islam was in Yorubaland much earlier. For instance, Johnson mentions the presence of a Nupe Muslim emissary—Baba Yigi—who was sent there by another Muslim cleric—Baba Kewu—to admonish the ruler, Alafin Ajiboyede, because of his excesses.<sup>36</sup> Alafin Ajiboyede is believed to be one of the rulers of Oyo during the period of exile in Igboho; and the Igboho period of Oyo history has been dated to c. 1535-c. 1610.<sup>37</sup> Even if Islam was introduced during the reign of Alafin Ajagbo as suggested by Gbadamosi,<sup>38</sup> this would still fall within the seventeenth century as the author has also affirmed.

Apart from Nupe it appears that Muslim influence also reached Yorubaland from Borno. Although Yorubaland was less frequented than Nupe by Muslim traders, by the seventeenth century when Islam was probably introduced into Yorubaland a good number of mallams had become itinerant preachers particularly in Borno and Hausaland. It is possible that a few of them, or Muslim traders, moved as far south as old Oyo and a few other urban centres of the old Oyo empire.

In any case, by the middle of the seventeenth century, it seems that a Muslim community existed in old Oyo. It has been suggested that it was probably this Muslim community that sought guidance from Katsina on how to determine the precise time of sunset, maybe in connection with the Ramadan fast. Probably in response, Abu 'Abdullah b. Muhammad b. Masanih, (Dan Masani) wrote *Shifa' al-ruba fi tahrif fuqaha' Yoruba*<sup>39</sup>. If, in fact, the document was written to guide the Muslim community in Yorubaland, it could attest not only to the age of Islam in Yorubaland but also to the amount of attention paid to the practice of the religion as early as the seventeenth century. Definitely, by the eighteenth century, Islam had spread, mainly along the trade routes, not only to Oyo but also to Igboho, Kisi, Saki, Iseyin, Ikoyi, Ogbomoso, Owu, Ijana, Ketu and Baagri.<sup>40</sup> In fact, before the end of the century, the Yoruba were as much receivers as they were propagators of the Islamic faith. By now the Yoruba were already preaching and spreading Islam to Dahomey.<sup>41</sup> However, it may be observed that down to the end of this period the Muslims in Yorubaland remained only a minority. For instance, the Muslims in their respective communities were too few and too weak to hold their own with the outbreak of the *jihād* in Ilorin. As they were treated as suspects by their larger and stronger non-Muslim colleagues, the few Muslims were easily intimidated, some of them fleeing to join the jihadists in Ilorin while the others who stayed in their respective communities had to keep their cool even in the manifestation of their faith.<sup>42</sup>

36. *Ibid.* pp. 162-164.

37. Robert Smith, "The Alafin in circle: a study of the Igboho period in Oyo history", *Journal of African History*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 1965, pp. 57-77.

38. G.O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan, 1969) pp. 8 & 13.

39. M. Hiskett and A.D.H. Bivar, "The Arabic literature of Northern Nigeria . . ." *op. cit.* p. 116.

40. Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an expedition to explore the course and termination of the Niger; with a narrative of a voyage down that river to its termination* (Thomas Tegg, London, 1838 second ed.) Vol. 1, pp. 24-27.

G.O. Gbadamosi, *op. cit.* pp. 8-19.

41. *Ibid.* p. 8-9.

42. *Ibid.* pp. 23, 26-30.



It is doubtful if Islam ever spread to present-day eastern Nigeria up to the end of the eighteenth century. Certainly, the present writer has no knowledge of such a development.

### **Pattern of the Establishment of Islamic Tradition**

Although Islam spread to different parts of present-day Nigeria at different times, it is possible to discern a general pattern of its establishment. Generally, Islam began as a religion of aliens, then became the religion of an influential or ruling elite before it finally got accepted by the masses and became a popular and, later, a militant religion. Although we can identify these main phases of development generally, it is difficult to separate one phase clearly from the others. There was much overlapping, and the order of sequence was sometimes reversed. For instance, instead of the ruler and his ruling elite accepting Islam before the general masses, it seems that the situation in Oyo was the reverse. Here many rulers, including the Alafin, held out against Islam for quite a long time until a sizable and influential Muslim community of their subjects had accepted Islam. However, the three main stages of development generally describe the Nigerian experience up to about 1800.

Islam was initially seen as the religion of aliens. These were alien Muslim travellers, merchants and later scholars. Who was the alien from where and when? In Kanem-Borno we are told that Muhammad Wani who was reported to have introduced Islam to the royal court was from Fezzan. In Hausaland it was the Wangarawa, the Fulani, the Arabs and the Kanuri. In Nupe land it was the Arabs, the Kanuri and the Fulani; whereas the alien Muslims in Yorubaland were the Kanuri, the Nupe and the Hausawa. Whatever the ethnic identity of the first Muslim groups in the respective areas, there were some characteristics which were common to them. They often had their separate quarters as soon as their number could sustain a separate community. In their quarters, they established mosques and soon acquired a distinctive character through some of their habits and customs associated with the practice of Islam such as the five times daily congregational prayers, the mode of dressing and the total abstention from alcohol by some pious Muslims. This distinctive character sometimes appealed to some members of the indigenous population, especially the traders who had close dealing with the alien Muslim traders. Generally, it was these alien Muslim traders who first exposed the various indigenous communities to the outward manifestations of Islam. Their settlements along the trade routes and in the major trading centres constituted the nursery for the eventual propagation of Islam in Nigeria.

Trade and other factors such as warfare, emigration and inter-marriages which facilitated population movements generally encouraged the dispersal of Muslims into new areas. This was the case, for instance, of the Fulani herdsmen even though many of them were not Muslims initially. The story of their migration from the Senegambia region across the savannah and its effect on the spread of Islam is fairly well known. Traders also sought new frontiers of profitable business, for instance, the Wangara (Dyula) traders in present day Northern Nigeria and later the Kanuri and Hausa traders in southern Nigeria. For whatever reasons, once Muslims settled in foreign communities they tended to spread their religion and attract other Muslims. And as the Muslim population grew in any centre it began to attract Muslim scholars and clerics.

By the nature of their training, which usually took many years, their activities

demanding devotion to learning, teaching and preaching, and without a regular salary. Muslim scholars, therefore depended, in varying degrees, on the support given by the Muslim community. It was such Muslim communities that often gave the material comfort to the mallams so that the latter could pay due attention to learning, teaching and preaching as well as other religious duties. Among other things, these special circumstances and needs of the Muslim scholar tended to make the existence of a Muslim community, or some other patrons, a condition for the development of the class of 'ulama'

The arrival of the Muslim scholar, especially one credited with mystic power, was usually significant. Because of his fame, the Muslim leader could not keep away from the local ruler indefinitely. In fact both the ruler and the Muslim scholar had good reasons to be friends. The ruler saw the Muslim scholar as a mystic who could use his special powers to solve some pressing problems—to cause rain to fall during a drought, to make him win his wars and thereby enhance his prestige, and to offer special prayers for protection against witchcraft or nullify the evil effect of witchcraft if its spell had already been cast. It is irrelevant whether or not the Muslim scholar actually possessed the mystic power attributed to him. What is important is the belief that he did possess the power.

The power of literacy in Arabic which the Muslim scholar possessed was also required by the local ruler. Apart from serving as a charm maker, the Muslim scholar could also help as an adviser, an administrator or sometimes as a diplomat.

On the other hand, the Muslim scholar, more than the Muslim merchant, depended on the ruler for permission to stay in this territory, for personal safety, for protection and support against rivalry and jealousy, and for material comfort. More than that, the Muslim scholar placed a high premium on the possibility of converting the ruler to Islam, since by achieving that, the task of converting many in the community to Islam and therefore of establishing an orderly society envisaged in an Islamic state would be much facilitated. Often, mutual interest generated mutual confidence especially after a period of interaction. And sometimes, the ruler was converted to Islam. Meanwhile the ruler started to grant privileges to Muslims as Sarkin Kano, (probably, Rumfa) did, giving certain offices to the Wangara Muslim leaders.<sup>43</sup> The acceptance of Islam by the ruler could induce some of his subordinate *sarakuna* to follow suit especially now that Muslims were preferred for certain offices.

With the acceptance of Islam by the ruling elite, and the patronage given to Islam and Muslim leaders, the class of Muslim scholars grew through the immigration of learned Muslims from other areas and by the establishment of local centres for Islamic studies. This was the situation in Kano and Katsina especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For instance, we are told that Makhluḥ b. 'Alī Salih al-Bilbali (d. 1533-4) resided in Kano and Katsina among other places of present-day Nigeria before he returned to Timbuktu. Makhluḥ al-Bilbali is said to be a student of 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar, a great-uncle of Ahmad Baba of the Aqit family.<sup>44</sup> Another

43. In Ogbomoso, which is very familiar to the present writer, early Muslim leaders were appointed trade officers with the title of *Parakoyi* as these Muslim leaders were known to enjoy the confidence of the alien Muslim traders from Northern Nigeria.

44. J.O. Hunwick, "Songhay, Hausaland and Bornu . . ." *op. cit.* pp. 110-111.

great scholar of Katsina mentioned is Muhammad al-Kashinawi, better known as Dan marina (d. c. 1655) who is suggested to have taught Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad b. Masanih b. Mujamad. b. 'Abdu Allah b. Nuh al-Barnawi al-Kashinawi of the celebrated Dan Masani family of Katsina. Dan Masani (1595-1667) was of Borno origin. He was such a famous scholar and adviser to the rulers of Katsina that his name has become an official state title in Katsina.<sup>45</sup> By the eighteenth century, several Hausa states could boast of their own indigenous Muslim scholars. Al-Hajj Jibril b. 'Umar, one of the teachers of Shaikh 'Uthman b. Fodiye is said to be one of such scholars.<sup>46</sup>

With the growing class of the '*ulama*' learning, teaching and preaching could be carried to various sections of the communities by the itinerant scholars and preachers. Consequently, the Muslim population continued to grow as many more of the masses began to accept Islam even if only nominally to start with. Thus Islam was becoming a popular religion of the masses. By the end of the eighteenth century in Katsina, for instance, the majority of the population had identified themselves as Muslims.<sup>47</sup>

But another consequence of the growing number of learned Muslim leaders was the emergence of a breed of '*ulama*', especially those who were not associated closely with the royal court, who tended to be vocal in their criticism of non-Islamic customs and practices which, hitherto, had remained unchallenged. This vigorous criticism not only exposed many of the existing non-Islamic practices which had previously been condoned but also provoked reactions of those who were unwilling to abandon these practices. Rather than see this as a period of crisis, some have taken the information, now made available on these existing non-Islamic practices as indicating stagnation and degeneration.<sup>48</sup> This is not necessarily so. Far from being a sign of stagnation and degeneration, in the areas of present-day northern Nigeria under discussion, such a vigorous criticism probably reflected the usual lively debate and controversy often generated by increased knowledge of any given topic.

Since its acceptance here, Islam has always had to contend with non-Islamic customs and practices. The acceptance of Islam has never meant to most converts a complete abandonment of all non-Islamic practices associated with traditional religion. In fact, many initially accepted Islam because early Muslim leaders were liberal in their interpretation of what constitutes the profession of Islam, and therefore were tolerant of some non-Islamic practices, believing, as many Muslims still do, that new converts can, with time, improve their practice of Islam. But while some continue to progress along the ladder of perfection others find it difficult to improve. In a situation of increasing knowledge of Islam by a steadily increasing number of '*ulama*', what had earlier been condoned, maybe out of ignorance, or tolerated with optimism

45. Y. B. Usman, "Some aspects of the external relations of Katsina before 1804" *Savanna: A Journal of the Environmental and social sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1972, p. 186.

46. Bivar and Hiskett, "The Arabic literature of Nigeria to 1804" *op. cit.* p. 141.

47. Y. B. Usman, *The Transformation of Katsina c. 1796-1903: The overthrow of the Sarauta system and the establishment and evolution of the emirate*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1974) p. 179.

48. We find it difficult to agree with Trimmingham who has described as a period of stagnation the two centuries (17th and 18th) between the fall of Songhay and the establishment of Islamic theocracies. J. S. Trimmingham, *op. cit.* pp. 141-54.

that the new converts would improve, might later be exposed and condemned especially by a new breed of Muslim scholars who had no commitment to defend the established order.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Islam in Nigeria had reached this stage when a new breed of Muslim scholars such as Jibril b. 'Umar, and after him, Shaikh 'Uthman b. Fodiye and his lieutenants challenged the status quo and advocated reforms for a better practice of Islam which would usher in a better organised society according to their concept and understanding of Islam.

## NIGERIA BEFORE 1800: ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND INTER-GROUP RELATIONS

J. F. A. AJAYI & E. J. ALAGOA

### Introduction

The history of Nigeria before 1800 can be much more than just a collection of the histories of individual peoples and political and ethnic units. It should also be possible to have a national historical perspective embracing the economic, cultural, political and other interactions between the units. It is, of course, necessary to begin with the histories of the individual groups, but we need to lay greater stress on inter-group relationships, to compare developments within the various groups, and to relate developments in each group to the emerging Nigeria-wide pattern.

Several problems confront the historian of Nigeria before 1800. First, there is still a paucity of studies of the individual groups and units from which the national perspective may be derived. Second is the traditional orientation of historians to the study of individual men, not of generalized man, and to the histories of individual political units or communities, not of human endeavour within a complex interrelated social system. Yet the need for a shift in emphasis from political issues to the general pattern of change and developments in institutions, ideas, economies and technologies requires a change in historical methodology. Nigerian historians must learn some of the methodology of the archaeologists who evaluate change with reference to ecology and environment rather than to ethnic and state boundaries; and of the social scientists who adopt a comparative and synthetic approach.

In the present state of accomplished work and available knowledge on Nigeria's more remote past all this paper can do is to map out the kinds of themes that can be discussed, the types of data that may be sought, and the forms of evidence which seem likely in the future to shed more light on our subject. Here and there, tentative conclusions may be possible, but we shall be dealing more often with cautious speculations.

### Geographical Setting

Nigeria is not a self-contained geographical unit. Even the Cameroon mountains and Lake Chad which might appear to be natural barriers on the eastern side have not prevented human movement across them. Thus there were migrations of peoples across the southern end of the Cameroon mountains, and Lake Chad stood at the



centre of the Kanem-Borno empire. To the north, the Hausa plains stretch to the Asben mountains. On the western side, there were no fixed barriers, except perhaps of the Borgu hills to a limited extent, a situation especially conducive to the free movement of peoples.

In spite of the openness of the borders, however, there is a compactness about the Nigerian geographical environment which encouraged greater movement and interaction of peoples within it than with peoples outside it. This compactness comes principally from two factors. The first is the complementarity of the Sudan belt and the forest zone with the intervening transitional Middle Belt dominated by the Jos Plateau. This complementarity has encouraged the movement of peoples, goods, and ideas north and south across the zones. Thus the growing dessication of the Sahara in prehistoric times may have resulted in a southward migration of peoples. Similarly, because of the greater suitability of the Sudan belt for the development of settled populations and the development of metallurgy and agriculture, people may have moved from this belt into the forest zone armed with iron tools, among others. On the other hand, there has also been movement from south to north in more historical times. The trans-Saharan trade of many Sudanic states had been based in part on products from the forest zone or the Middle Belt. In addition, many southern polities and peoples have, at different periods before 1800, expanded northwards or exerted pressure on groups to the north. Such had been the case of the Jukun kingdom of the Middle Belt which at different times in the seventeenth century made incursions northwards as far as Kano and Katsina, while the Benin kingdom of the forest zone and the Igbo peoples to the east exerted pressure on peoples and politics to the immediate north in the Middle Belt.

The second factor engendering compactness has been the essential unity of the river systems. Nigeria is really the basin of the lower Niger south of the Bussa rapids with the Benue, their tributaries, and the enormous delta spreading out into several creeks and lagoons. The unity of these waterways encouraged a network of relationships within the basin. These river networks provided routes of contact between peoples cutting across the north and south axis and supplementing it. Accordingly, one must recognise east and west movements of peoples and ideas as well as the north and south movements already suggested by the vegetation zones. It is because of this compactness that despite the fortuitous manner in which the political unity of Nigeria came to be achieved, culturally and economically, Nigeria was not really an arbitrary creation.

### **Agriculture**

Given such a geographical environment, we can presume a good deal of interaction among different peoples in Nigeria from early times. Evidence from archaeology could gradually fill out the details of the story of this interaction between the early inhabitants of Nigeria as they tried to use the tools available to them in the most ecologically advantageous areas, and to learn from their neighbours about new techniques and improved tools.

The distribution of stone tools over Nigeria, even in the forest zone at places where stones are not available, suggests movements of peoples and goods. Excavations at widely separated sites at Rop rock shelter in the Jos Plateau, the Mejiro cave near Old Oyo, Iwò Eleru near Akure, and Afikpo have shown two cultural layers of microlithic

stone tools, the lower one without pottery, the upper containing pottery.<sup>1</sup> The upper pottery layer would seem to belong to agricultural populations, but at Iwo Eleru, even the lower non-pottery cultural tools could be associated with some form of agriculture from evidence of the skeleton found in it. Even considering the distribution of stone tools alone, it would be difficult to deny the evidence of intercourse and movement. Stone tools found on the surface of the ground have, in fact, become incorporated into local oral traditions and religious cults. This is the case of the *shango* stones among the Yoruba, the *ughavan* among the Edo, and the *swafini* stones at Oruokolo in the eastern Niger Delta.<sup>2</sup> At the Niger Delta location, numbers of stone grinders and others have been gathered at a shrine in a locality where no rocks are available.

We may consider also the problem of the transition from total dependence on hunting and food gathering to stock raising and agriculture because the domestication of food crops and animals was the basic activity necessary for control of the settled communities. This is a story about which we know very little. But it is a story which, as the evidence is gathered, can be told on a Nigeria-wide basis.

The question of the probable areas where the agricultural revolution in the primary domestication of food crops took place remains very controversial and scholarly opinion about it changes fast.<sup>3</sup> Current opinion favours the view that there were probably quite a few such centres in West Africa in relation to different crops. The early domestication of varieties of sorghum (guinea corn) on the middle Niger has been canvassed as *pennisetum* on the Lake Chad. This invention might have been independent, or it might have owed something to the introduction of wheat cultivation from the Nile valley, whose techniques were then adapted to local grasses. How soon the cultivation of sorghum became widespread in the Sudanic belt of Nigeria is not clear, but this was probably long before the first archaeological evidence at Daima dated to the 9th or 10th century A.D.<sup>4</sup>

The domestication of crops in Nigeria did not necessarily follow the introduction of technique of cultivation from outside. Many food crops grew wild in the Nigerian environment and were exploited by Late Stone Age people in the fertile river valleys of the Sudan area and the edge of the forest to the south. From gathering these in the wild, there was a tendency to protect them. The transition from protection and observation of those reproducing themselves vegetatively to domestication was a distinct possibility in the more open areas on the edge of the forests. It has been pointed out that both yam and the oil palm were susceptible to this. What is more, it is

1. Ekpo Eyo, "1964 excavations at Rop shelter", *West African Archaeology Newsletter*, 3, 1965, 3-13; "Rop rock shelter excavations 1964", *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 2, 1972, 13-16; T. Shaw, "Excavations at Iwo Eleru", *West African Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 3, 1965, pp. 15-16.

2. G. Connah, *Polished stone axes in benin, Lagos*, n.d.; E.J. Alagba, *A History of the Niger Delta*, Ibadan, 1972, pp. 132-33; Fred Anozie, a stone-age specialist at the Dept of Archaeology, University of Ibadan, states that some of the stone tools at Oruokolo are similar to rock in the Jebba area of the Niger basin.

3. G.P. Murdock, *Africa: its Peoples and their Culture History*, New York, 1959; D.G. Coursey, *Yams*, London, 1967.

4. G. Connah, "Progress Report on Archaeological Work in Bornu, 1964-66, with reference to the excavations at Daima mound", *Nigerian Historical Research Scheme: Interim Report*, Zaria, 1967, pp. 7-27; "Radio-carbon dates from Daima, N.E. Nigeria; research note" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 12, 1967, pp. 741-42.

suggested that this may have taken place long before the introduction of iron. And in the case of the yam vine, the surrounding trees provided support rather than an impediment. Some of the evidence from Iwo Eleru suggests that Late Stone Age man in the forest possessed pottery and stone implements with which he could cultivate yam as early as 3000 B.C. Similarly, it is argued that the penetration of the oil palm and kolanut from the more open areas into the forest belt represented deliberate human activity since these crops grew wild only in the more open areas where they received adequate sunshine.

### **Iron, Bronze, and State Formation**

There is very little known about the spread of iron from the area of the Nok culture in central Nigeria. Yet, unlike the domestication of food crops which could have happened fortuitously and happened in several places independently, the techniques of iron-working are very precise and more likely to have spread from one source. Iron does not occur in nuggets. It has to be smelted by heating the ore to a high temperature in an enclosed furnace and blasting it through enforced draught. It is the kind of technology that probably spread by diffusion. The archaeological evidence suggests knowledge of how to work iron existed in Daima in the Lake Chad region in the 5th century A.D., but was known in the area of the Nok Culture in the Niger valley much earlier in the 3rd century A.D.<sup>5</sup> We cannot presume that the technology of iron spread to different parts of Nigeria only from Nok, but the chances that Nok was the most important single source of this diffusion within Nigeria cannot at present be lightly dismissed. The implication of this for the history of iron technology in Nigeria, with the economic and political effects as well as the possible impact on the development of agriculture, is a matter for speculation until more precise information is available from archaeological research. For example, apart from the more rapid expansion of the domesticated indigenous West African crops was the spread of iron also a factor in the spread of Asiatic crops, such as the plantain, banana, and water yam?

The 1st millennium A.D. or the first millennium following the introduction of iron is a very obscure period in Nigerian history. Yet it must have been a period of intense economic activities, rapid growth of populations and the emergence of state organizations. Since it was these state organizations which cultivated and transmitted myths of origin, it is now believed that the myths must refer to the origin not of Nigerian peoples, but to the origin of the states and of their surviving dynasties. They probably relate to the spread of iron which provided a new technology and source of power necessary for social control. They also relate to inter-group relationships in this period.

In this connection, the extent to which the myths of origin of different Nigerian peoples may be correlate—seems significant. Of particular significance are the myths of origin of the different peoples living around the Niger-Benue confluence: Borgu, Oyo and Nupe; Yoruba and Edo; Edo, Igalla and Nupe; Igalla and Nri; Jukun,

5. B.E.B. Fagg, "The Nok Culture in Prehistory", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1959, pp. 288-93.

Idoma, and Igalla. The Niger-Benue area would appear to be a major crossroads in the general spread of the technology of iron working, and the ideas of state organization, not in one single line of diffusion, but in several interlocking chains. However, the full significance of these interlocking chains of myths of origin in interpreting early economic contacts and intergroup relationships awaits further study.

It seems significant to note that bronze technology and the *cire perdue* method in sculpture have been widespread over Nigeria, and have often been associated with the regalia and court cults of the states. Thus the art of bronze sculpture has provided the main evidence for the validity of oral traditions placing Ife at the centre of diffusion of political and cultural influences to Benin and parts of the Niger-Benue valley and throughout Yorubaland.<sup>7</sup> Recent excavations at Owo have tended to confirm the traditions that there was indeed a traffic in artistic techniques between Ife and Benin, with Owo serving as a kind of half-way house. From Benin, bronze pieces were sent to parts of the delta and other places on the Niger within the political influence of the Oba of Benin, including the Igala court at Idah. Nupe traditions of origin suggest that they learnt the art of bronze casting from Idah. In spite of this widespread diffusion of bronze regalia and technology throughout the states, the flowering of the distinctive but not isolated school of Igbo-Ukwu suggests that, given a diffusionist hypothesis, the routes of diffusion through Nigeria and West Africa must have been diverse. What is more, a study of this art has also provided evidence for connecting the cultures of the bronze age of Nigeria with those of the iron age. Thus the Ife bronzes and their artistic tradition have been identified as being closely related to the tradition of the Nok terracotta figurines.

From the evidence of Nigeria's art history, it would appear that the state systems provided bases for wide-ranging activities and contacts between peoples. Even in the sphere of economics, the states must have provided protection for its citizens engaged in long-distance commerce. It is true that many stateless communities developed intricate systems of local markets and trade, as in the Igbo area of eastern Nigeria. However, some power was required to give traders the confidence to venture far afield. The centralized states provided its citizens with the confidence of a protective power. The case of the Nri, Awka, and the Aro in Igboland, shows also that oracles, supernatural sanctions, and even the possession of essential skills could serve to ensure the security of persons engaged in long-distance trade and inter-group movements.

### **The Niger-Benue as a Carrier of Trade**

The extent to which different Nigerian peoples interacted through trade becomes clearer in the 14th and 15th centuries as we emerge out of the obscure millenium. Several major trade routes become prominent, linking Hausaland with Borno; Borno with Adamawa and the Benue valley; Hausaland with Nupe and the confluence; Hausaland with Yorubaland; Yorubaland with Benin. In addition there was constant

6. S. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, Lagos, 1956. S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, London, (1942). J.S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom*, London, 1968. C.K. Meek, *A Sudanese Kingdom*, London, 1931. J.U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, Ibadan, 1968.

7. F. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture: Ekpo Eyo*, "New treasures from Nigeria", *Expedition*, xiv, 2, 1972, pp. 2-11.

traffic on the Niger-Benue waterway and on the creeks and lagoons. These were in addition to the innumerable branch routes and networks of local routes linking various periodic markets. Each of these major routes deserves to be studied in detail, and we are only considering here the Niger-Benue waterway as a case study.

River systems probably played a much larger part as means of communication and carriers of trade and ideas in the past than they do in modern times. Before the coming of highways, railways, and airways, rivers provided the only thoroughfares for the cheap transportation of large quantities of commodities over long distances in many parts of Africa. The savanna areas had pack animals, but these were more expensive to maintain and operate than the canoe; while the forest areas had to make do with transportation through narrow bush paths using, in the main, human portage.

In addition to their uses as carriers of trade, rivers provided a source of plentiful protein in the harvest of fish which riverain peoples were able to bring forth. To such riverain canoeists, of course, rivers such as the Benue and Niger were all important. To the majority of agricultural peoples however, the benefits of rivers were often secondary and indirect, except in desert and semi-desert areas where irrigation was imperative. Thus, the Igala whose territory lay within the confluence of the Niger and the Benue rated farming and hunting above 'watermanship or any form of riverain activity'.<sup>8</sup> These attitudes were the result of the fact that important as was river trade and communication to the areas through which the Niger and Benue passed, canoe-manship and fishing were specialized activities pursued by a minority of groups.

The importance of the Niger and Benue in early Nigerian history is further reinforced by the fact that three major kingdoms flourished on their banks. The Jukun empire embraced most of the Benue valley and exercised influence over much of northern Nigeria as far as Kano, and appears to have been known in the south as far as the estuary of the Cross River.<sup>9</sup> The Igala kingdom controlled areas around the confluence of the Niger and Benue, and traded below the confluence as far south as Aboh and Onya at the head of the Niger Delta.<sup>10</sup> As for the Nupe kingdom above the confluence of the Niger-Benue, it has been said: 'The big rivers Niger and Kaduna form the two axes of the country, and efficient, natural system of communication. It is no accident that the early Nupe kingdom grew in the area near the confluence of the two rivers, which were its first high-roads as well as its natural boundaries'.<sup>11</sup> The strategic location of these three kingdoms on the Niger-Benue meant that the history of traffic on these rivers would have a great deal to do with the history and relations of peoples comprising them.

Concerning Jukun control of traffic on the Benue, little is known. It seems noteworthy, however, that the capital of the kingdom moved gradually south, away from the Benue with the decline of its power through the 18th and 19th centuries, from Biepi to Puje to Wukari.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of Jukun-speaking peoples have, in fact, remained agricultural, except for the Wurbo. And it would appear that the

8. J.S. Boston, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

9. O. Arikpo, *Who are the Nigerians*, Lagos, 1958, p. 19.

10. Boston, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

11. S.F. Nadel, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

12. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa Past and Present*, London, 1958, p. 16.



decline of the Jukun had something to do with the expansion of the Bata Bachama down the Benue in their canoes pushing the Chamba down on the Jukun. At the present time the Bata occupy 200 miles of the Benue from Garua to the Numan-Muri border.<sup>13</sup>

In the Igala kingdom, the riverain groups derived authority from the Ata over sections of the river. The heads of three riverain groups were vested with the titles of Abokko Onukwu Ata, Agaidoko, and Omogbaje, by the Ata to whom each was accountable for what happened on the Niger.<sup>14</sup> These three then competed for control over the parts of the river downstream from Idah, and so over trade with Igbo groups and with the Niger Delta. Omogbaje presided over the waterside of the capital of Idah. Abokko governed the upper reaches of the river above Idah. Thus, the Lander brothers coming down the river in 1830 met Abokko first, and referred to him as the 'Superintendent of the Board of Trade in this river'. Later explorers coming up from the delta came under the control of Agaidoko and called him 'the war chief of the river'.

In the Nupe kingdom, the Kede (Kyedye) were the canoemen *par excellence*. They were assigned this unique place even in the traditions of origin of the kingdom. According to these, the Kede were the canoemen who came with the founder, Tsoede, from Idah, and were made 'Lords of the Water' by him over the aboriginal groups on the river.<sup>15</sup> The Kede acquired this position among the Nupe because they alone were devoted solely to river activities. Other groups such as the Gbedegi, Bataci (Marsh Dwellers), Kupa and Dibo carried on agriculture in addition to fishing and canoeing. Accordingly, although these groups could fish 'in the backwaters and creeks of the Niger and Kaduna—[they could] never [fish] in the main river, where Kede alone are entitled to fish'.<sup>16</sup>

Kede control of Niger trade and traffic beyond the confluence in Nupe territory was challenged south of Eggan by the Kakanda. This group of non-Nupe stock said to have been part of the Igala kingdom at some period, refused Kede canoes entrance into their section of the Niger.<sup>17</sup> Trade goods going south had to be transferred at Eggan from Kede canoes into Kakanda canoes.

The traditions concerning Tsoede's migration from Idah contain one of the earliest lists of foods and ideas carried on the Niger. These traditions suggest that prior to the 16th century, the Igala kingdom exercised influence over the Beni federation and other peoples up to the confluence of the Kaduna with the River Niger. These peoples sent down the river to Idah, annually, a tribute of slaves, every family head contributing a male member of his house.<sup>18</sup> It was thus that Tsoede was originally sent from Nku to Idah. The list of goods Tsoede brought up the river from Idah was,

13. Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa*, pp. 17-18; C.K. Meek, *op. cit.*, ascribes Jukun decline to Fulani and Chamba attacks.

14. Boston, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

15. Nadel, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

16. S.F. Nadel, "The Kede: a riverine state in Northern Nigeria" in *African Political systems*, Edited M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, London, 1940, p. 168.

17. Nadel, "The Kede", p. 17 f. 1; D. Forde, "The Nupe" in *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London, 1955, p. 20.

18. Nadel, *Byzantium*, p. 73ff.

naturally, longer, since it represents a list of the things the Nupe recognize to have come to them originally from the south. All the insignia of Nupe kingship are listed: 'a bronze canoe' "as only kings have", manned with twelve Nupe slaves; the bronze *hakaki*, the long trumpets . . . ; state drums hung with brass bells; and the heavy iron chains and fetters, which, endowed with strong magic, have become the emblems of the king's judicial power, and are known today as *egba Tsoede*, Chain of Tsoede"<sup>19</sup>. The objects of bronze art may be specially noted since that art has taken hold among the Nupe, and the most famous Nupe bronzes, those of Tada and Jebba, have been related to the Ife bronzes.<sup>20</sup> According to Nadel, some Nupe traditions list the Tada and Jebba figures among the gifts from Ata of the Igala to Tsoede, while other traditions deny this claim.

At this stage it may be noted merely, that a further study of traditions and styles of bronzes may reveal something of the lines of communication and exchange in ancient Nigeria. Willett has already suggested the lines of connection from Ife to Benin, and the Niger-Benue valley. The Nupe traditions suggest a direct derivation from Idah, together with "blacksmiths, and brass-smiths who taught the crude blacksmiths of Nupe their more advanced technique; the canoemen who came with him (Tsoede) imported into Nupe the craft of building large canoes of which the Nupe are said to have been ignorant at that time".<sup>21</sup>

After the 16th century, the Kede are said to have carried mainly downstream produce of the interior to places outside the Nupe kingdom: 'gowns [of Hausa and Nupe make], horses from Hausa, potash from Lake Chad, Nupe-made mats and straw hats, fish and rice from the Niger; and north: kolanuts from the markets in Southern Nigeria; European Salt, and palm oil'.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, trade in the Nupe kingdom operated on multiple routes: [from Bida] one through Jima and Dokomba, down the Kaduna by canoe to Muregi, where the route crosses the Niger and goes on to Ilorin and Yoruba; a second, to Badeggi and Kachia, where it crosses the Niger to Eggan and Yagba country; the third route goes from Bida to Kacha, or Giddi, farther down the river, where the trade goods are loaded on canoes on their way south to Lokoja, Idah, and Onitsha. In addition to these land routes we have also an "all water" route the north terminus of which used to be at Raba or Ogudu'.<sup>23</sup> The routes overland in part represent the attempts of other Nupe groups to by-pass Kede monopoly of the carrier traffic on the Niger.

Before the 19th century, when European salt began to be imported into Nigeria in significant quantities, salt from the Jukun country must have been one of the most important commodities carried both on the Benue and the Niger. The Jukun country contains a large number of salt-bearing springs, marshes, and pools. It has been suggested that the Jukun state owed some of the impetus for its formation and growth to its salt, as also the development of its ritual base.<sup>24</sup> The Jukun developed rituals

19. Nadel, *Byzantium*, p. 74.

20. F. Willett, *Ifé in the History of West African Sculpture*, op. cit.

21. Nadel, "The Kede", p. 169. The Kusopa (Nupe) also planted kola, see Nadel, "The Nupe state and community", *Africa*, VIII (3), 1935, p. 258.

22. Nadel, *Byzantium*, pp. 319-20.

23. Meek, *Sudanese Kingdom*, p. 428.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

over the salt industry which were respected even by the Muslim Hausa who came to gain control over some of the salt springs in the 19th century. Accordingly, the Jukun retained ritual control even after they had lost physical control. The salt industry was such an important factor in Jukun influence that the name *Kororofa* by which it is known throughout northern Nigeria has been derived from that industry. The word *kororofa* derived from *kororo-apa*, for the salt won was distributed over the northern provinces in measures which were known both to the Hausa and to the Jukun as *kororo*.<sup>25</sup> Thus Kororofa was Kororo-apa, the 'salt people'.

When Baikie visited the Benue in 1854, he thought there existed in the area possibilities for trade in 'palm oil, shea-butter, cam-wood, and ivory, . . . [and] groundnuts, indigo, peppers, cotton, croton—oil seeds, hides, ostrich feathers etc. . . . [and] rice, corn, yams, provisions, native cloth, etc.'<sup>26</sup> The volume of exchange of goods between the various Nigerian peoples called for the use of means of exchange and valuation at the intra-group and inter-group levels. The cowry shell was the most widespread money object in use over most of Nigeria.<sup>27</sup> Two types of iron currency have also been recorded in the Benue valley. The first type was shaped in the form of a hoe, 'these are tied up in bundles of a dozen, or thereabouts, and 36 are said to be the ordinary price of a slave'.<sup>28</sup>

It was called *akika* by the Idoma and Jukun, *ibia* by the Tiv (Mitshi in Baikie), and *agelema* by the Hausa. A second iron money was 'pointed towards the extremities, but thicker in the middle'.<sup>29</sup> These were called *kantai* among the Jukun, and 100 *kantai* were equivalent to a male slave. According to Meek, this same currency was known as *taji* among 'the Kona and surrounding tribes on both banks of the Benue'.<sup>30</sup> In time manillas also reached the Benue valley from the coast, possibly up the Cross River valley.

In local trade and exchange on the Niger-Benue, exchange units based on produce were probably equally important. Among the Jukun, a standard calabash of corn, called an *agi* was one standard of value. One such *agi* was considered equivalent to a large manilla. In addition, salt was used in the same manner when filled in 'a cup-shaped receptacle made of plaited palm fronds' called a *baha* or *kororo*.<sup>31</sup> Five *kororo* were equivalent to one large manilla or to one *agi*.

Of the different currencies cowries were probably the best known and were first introduced via Egypt into the Western Sudan. Although it was not popular in Hausaland or Borno till the 19th century, it was introduced from the Western Sudan into southern Nigeria, probably by Dyula traders in Borgu. By the time the Portuguese

25. W.B. Baikie, *Narrative of an exploring voyage up the rivers Kwora and Benue in 1854*, London, 1856, p. 455.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

27. Baikie, *Narrative*, pp. 114-15, lists places where cowries were used in the Niger Delta, Kwora, Yoruba, Bini, Igbo, Igara (Igala), Nupe Hausa, Pulo (Fulani). See also Nadel, *Byzantium*, p. 314.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

29. Meek, *Sudanese Kingdom*, p. 452. He also cites Barth's evaluation of *akika* at 40 to a slave, as against Baikie's of 36.

30. Meek, *Sudanese Kingdom*, pp. 452-53.

31. U.I. Ukwu, 'The development of trade and marketing in Iboland', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. III, 1967; D. Northrup, 'The growth of trade among the Igbo before 1800', *Journal of African History*, XIII, (2), 1972, pp. 217-36.

arrived, it was already well established and it was this that induced the Portuguese to import cowries directly from the Indian Ocean. But we do not yet know the extent of distribution or its pattern of expansion at different periods. The distribution of iron currencies is just as uncertain. They preceded the European traders, but on the importation of cheaper European metals, they would seem to have been diverted into the manufacturing of iron implements. Manillas manufactured in Europe became more widespread. These were modelled on copper or brass bracelets and also used as currencies before the coming of the Portuguese, who were able to import cheaper manillas and thereby made their use more widespread. Copper rods similarly became popular. Besides metal currencies, cloth, salt, horses and slaves were used as mediums of exchange. The economic effects of using these different types of currencies and of the importation of cheaper species need further study. Evidence remains fragmentary and we are not yet in a position to make a study of the changing significance or the monetary value of different economic activities at different periods between 1500 and 1800. Similarly, the evidence about other trade routes is just as tantalizing and inconclusive, and we need to deepen our knowledge about this.

### The Impact of Slave and other Types of Trade

The case study of the Niger-Benue shows something of the importance of trade routes in inter-group relations and contacts before 1800. But we must remember that the rivers were by no means the only routes through which communities exchanged goods and ideas. To take the inland region of the Igbo country east of the Niger, the trade routes developed by the Aro through the entire area and to the Middle Belt from periods before the 19th century are very well known.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the Awka penetrated to many parts of the Igbo hinterland with their crafts of blacksmithing and carving. Both the Aro and the Awka reinforced their influence and economic impact by the use of oracles and religious sanctions. But before the rise of the Aro and Awka systems, the Nri had achieved a widespread theocratic influence over the Igbo areas on both banks of the River Niger. Although the standard accounts of the Nri hegemony suggest that it was purely religious dominance, the Eze Nri also collected types of tribute, and the Igbo-Ukwu data provide evidence of a trade element also in the Nri system. The Igbo-Ukwu data suggest the Igbo heartland area received imports possibly from as far afield as the Sahara (copper for the bronzes), India or Venice (beads).<sup>33</sup> The makers of the Igbo bronzes are believed to have exported ivory, among other goods, to some or all of these places. All this activity is thought to have occurred over routes developed between the 9th and 16th centuries.

The existence before 1800 of other long-distance land routes over most of Nigeria, and other parts of West Africa, is revealed in the accounts of several early 19th century recaptured slaves.<sup>34</sup> Thus Ali Eisami Gazirmabe of Borno recounted at Freetown, his route of enslavement from Borno across Hausaland to the Borgu country, through

32. T. Shaw, *Igbo-Ukwu*, London, 1970, 271-85.

33. P. Curtin (ed.), *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, Madison, 1968, pp. 199-216 for account of Ali Eisami Gazirmabe of Borno.

34. Kay Williamson, 'Some food plant names in the Niger Delta', *Journal of American Linguistics*, XXXVI (2), 1970, pp. 156-67.

Yorubaland to Porto Novo where he was shipped away at the beginning of the 19th century.

Finally, a study of economic developments and inter-group relationships in Nigeria before 1800 must look at the total economic impact of the slave trade on the Nigerian peoples as a whole. Here we are not concerned merely with the extent to which the trade drained the region of manpower, provided opportunities for long-distance trade, and led to other kinds of relationships with Europeans, but specifically with the way in which the European trade had implications for inter-group relationships within Nigeria. Articles from the European trade did not stop on the coast, but stimulated increased internal trade within Nigeria. Thus European trade goods provided the means for the coastal peoples to expand the bounds of their trade activities and territory.

The trade in slaves itself was a source of inter-group interaction, not merely in terms of encouraging people to war, but also in providing a source for recruiting skilled labour from other communities. By the end of the 18th century, colonies of strangers originating in such slaves existed in different parts—Nupe warriors in Lagos, Hausa horse attendants and veterinarians in different parts of Yorubaland, Awka blacksmiths in Benin, Igbo farmers in Calabar, etc. Not all the strangers were necessarily of slave origin or remained slaves, but the slave trade did provide a most widespread network of inter-group mixing in Nigeria.

One other aspect of the slave trade of great economic importance was the introduction of new food crops from the New World. Although the evidence remains controversial, it is becoming clear that some major crops were introduced as a by-product of the slave trade, notably, cassava, perhaps maize, rice, and citrus fruits. A recent comparative linguistic study of the names of these crops shows not merely how close to Portuguese originals the local names in the Niger Delta are, but also indicate possible lines of the spread of these crops across the Niger Delta and into the hinterland.<sup>35</sup> Their rapid spread and the dominant position they have come to occupy in the people's diet is evidence of their economic, and possibly, demographic significance. It is necessary for work to commence on the history of the spread of these and other crops, the agricultural problems of their adaptation and cultivation in their new environment, and of their economic and demographic significance in the history of Nigeria.

### Conclusion

Until the requisite amount of research is conducted into the problems highlighted in this chapter, it is not possible to make definitive statements concerning economic developments and inter-group relations in Nigeria before 1800. Accordingly, the evidence on which we have to go for the moment is scanty in the extreme. Still, some general conclusions are indicated.

Geographical factors seem to dispose the territory of Nigeria to movement of peoples from one ecological zone to another in migrations or in interdependent

35. For example, the study of food crop names in the Niger Delta showed that while a few Eastern Delta groups seem to have derived the name for onion from the Portuguese, the majority of Delta peoples had got it from the Nigerian hinterland, ultimately from Hausa, possibly, from Arabic.



relationships of trade exchange. These exchanges and contacts seem to have occurred even in prehistoric times from the little archaeological evidence yet brought to light of stone tools, pottery, the spread of iron technology, the bronzes, and also in the spread of food cultivation and of food crops. In addition, oral traditions, which on the surface purporting to be about the origins of Nigerian peoples uniformly tell of widespread mixing of various groups and of migrations over long distances, mainly north to south, but also west to east, east to west, and south to north. The Niger-Benue system with its delta to the south, provided a big waterway uniting widely separated groups through the exchange of goods, even if the goods reached their destination through several relays of intermediaries. Parts of the country not linked by rivers did business by the use of land routes. Market systems were developed, and various sanctions were used for the control of these trade routes and the regulation of inter-group commerce. These sanctions were often enforced for the political and military authority of a state such as Benin, Oyo, Borno, or the Hausa states. But they could also be the more informal sanctions of religion and moral authority as in the cases of Nri and the Aro in Igbo-land. These local economic developments and contacts were reinforced rather than superseded or created by the introduction of European external trade from the Atlantic coast of Nigeria. The coastal people and states were provided additional goods for distribution through their ancient routes and contacts, and there was probably greater incentive for expansion of trade areas. This was especially the case when the Europeans required slaves in much larger numbers than were required in the internal trade. The overseas trade in slaves also brought new groups from the New World. But in considering the impact of external trade from overseas, we must also remember that a longer standing contact existed with places to the north of Nigeria by overland routes. Nigerian peoples then, in the period before 1800 were not isolated from each other or from the outside world.

## THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

A. F. C. RYDER

The first cargoes of slaves carried from Nigerian shores in European ships were destined not for the Americas but for the Gold Coast where Portuguese traders seeking gold found it necessary to offer slaves as well as cloth and metal-wares who brought gold to the coast. It was soon discovered that slaves could be obtained quite close at hand in the rivers west of the Niger Delta, and by 1480 it had become a regular practice for one or two Portuguese caravels to enter these rivers each year in search of slaves. At this time the whole coastal region acquired in Portuguese charts and documents the name of the "five slave rivers".<sup>1</sup> Contact between Benin and Portugal, established in 1485, and the subsequent opening of a Portuguese trading post at Ughoton, led for a few years to a concentration of the slave trade in the Benin River, but before the end of the 15th century it had assumed new dimensions: to the west the Portuguese began to trade directly with the kingdom of Ijebu, while in the central and eastern delta a slave trade developed with the newly established Portuguese colonies on the previously uninhabited islands of Sao Tome and Principe.

On the African side the first people to become involved in the slave trade were the Ijo near the mouths of the "slave rivers". Their economy, when they first came into contact with the Portuguese, depended upon an exchange of the fish they caught and the salt they manufactured for the foodstuffs which they were unable to produce for themselves in the delta swamps. Inter-village rivalry over fishing grounds often led to fighting, and it may be that prisoners taken in such encounters provided the first slave cargoes. But the source of supply must have been expanded very early because in 1480 two Portuguese vessels carried away more than four hundred captives in a single voyage to one of the rivers. It is most unlikely that such numbers could have been procured by force or otherwise from the small fishing villages of the rivers; more probably they came from the same inland sources with which the Ijo were already trading for food. It is also probable that they were obtained specifically for resale to the Portuguese, for the small Ijo communities could not, at this stage of their development, have absorbed such numbers.

Pacheco Pereira's brief but valuable description of trade with the Ijo in the Rio Real (i.e., the Bonny and New Calabar River) was probably based upon personal observation.<sup>2</sup> Canoes carrying up to eighty men—"the largest in all Guinea"—were

1. The five were the *Primeiro*, the Benin River, the *Escravos*, the *Forcados* and the *Ramos*.

2. An English translation may be found in T. Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives*, Oxford, 1960 pp. 92-93.

travelling far inland to bring to a "large village" in the river estuary great quantities of yams and many slaves, cows and sheep; in exchange they were taking to the interior the salt manufactured by the Ijo. This traffic certainly predated the appearance of the Portuguese and was sufficiently intensive to support at least one Ijo village of some two hundred inhabitants—a much larger settlement than those existing at that time in the "slave rivers". Nevertheless the opening of trade with the Portuguese must have stimulated Ijo traffic with the interior because everything the Portuguese required—slaves and provisions—had to be brought from inland. The Ijo had in turn to increase their output of salt to pay their suppliers, for they appear to have kept for themselves most of the copper manillas which they received from the Portuguese in payment for the slaves and foodstuffs.<sup>3</sup> The opening of the slave trade thus gave a significant impetus to the economic activity of some Ijo villages, especially those of the eastern delta, and this in turn probably led to institutional changes needed to organize more intensive trade with the interior, increase salt production and negotiate effectively with new Europeans. On the other hand, it must be remembered that only a few Ijo communities did respond in this manner, and that their success or failure in so doing probably depended on an earlier development of long-distance trade.<sup>4</sup>

Where the Ijo had not developed the necessary infrastructure of trade, as was the case to the west of the delta, they were soon by-passed by the slave traders who took their ships far up the rivers in search of cities or states with whom they could conveniently trade. In this manner the Portuguese entered the coastal lagoon, presumably by crossing the Lagos bar, and sailed some fifty miles eastwards in order to buy slaves and ivory from the Ijebu. By the time of their arrival Ijebu-Ode, the Ijebu capital, was nearly a large town surrounded by its great earthwork and ruled by the Awujale.<sup>5</sup> They had to penetrate a still greater distance inland to make contact with the kingdom of Benin, but they found it profitable to do so because, as in Ijebu-Ode, they could deal with an organized state, and one moreover "which most of the time makes war on its neighbours and takes many captives whom we buy".<sup>6</sup> It is very probable that Oba Ozolua was ruling in Benin at this time—most Benin traditions maintain that he was the first Oba to receive Europeans at his court—so the Portuguese had come to Benin at a time in its history when it was in an especially

3. Pacheco Pereira observed that most of the Ijo wore copper collars. It is most unlikely that this metal was available in the region before the arrival of the Portuguese, so many manillas must have been converted into such ornaments.
4. This point is well put by Dr E.J. Alagoa in his article "Development of Institutions in the states of the eastern Niger Delta", *Journal of African History*, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1971, p. 273. "It would appear that which community took up the trans-Atlantic trade and which did not was determined by the extent to which such a community was already involved in the internal long-distance trade across the Niger Delta and to its hinterland. This was so because such a community would, by such previous commitment to internal trade, have already built up the basic internal superstructure for trade consisting of institutions, trade routes and relations with producing communities and market".
5. Pacheco Pereira mentions both the "very large ditch" and the "Agusale". A misreading of the manuscript has caused the "Agusale" to be identified as a river (*rio*) instead of a king (*rey*).
6. Pacheco Pereira.

favourable position to supply slaves. But there is no reason to assume that Ozolua's love of war was influenced more than marginally by the opportunities of the slave trade. And whereas the slave trade may have hastened the development of Ijo trading states, it is most unlikely to have had any appreciable effect upon the already complex monarchical systems of Benin and Ijebu.

The principal reason why the slave trade in its initial phase could have a relatively major impact only on small communities was that the trade itself was on a very small scale. Complete figures are, of course, beyond our reach, but there are sufficient indications to arrive at a fairly reliable estimate of the volume of this trade. The great majority of the slaves were carried either to Sao Jorge da Mina or to the Portuguese islands in the Gulf of Guinea. An average of two hundred was received each year at the first destination; the settlers of Sao Tome had a licence to import 1,080 slaves over a period of five years from 1493. Allowing for deaths on the voyage (which would have been fewer than on the long Atlantic crossing in subsequent centuries) and for a few slaves taken to Europe, the total number taken from Nigerian shores in the first, localized phase of the trade is hardly likely to have exceeded five hundred a year, divided perhaps in the proportion 2 : 1 between the Rio Real and Ijebu.

The first quarter of the 16th century witnessed a substantial increase in the number of slaves carried away by the Portuguese based on Sao Tome and Principe. Slaves destined for the Gold Coast too now passed through these islands, the direct traffic having been broken off in 1514. Up to a thousand a year may have been taken from Benin to Principe in 1515 and 1516, while a growing number went from there and from the Rio Real to provide a labour force for the booming sugar plantations of Sao Tome. The royal factor in the latter island received from the mainland no fewer than 6,300 slaves between 1525 and 1527; some may have been brought from the Congo, but most came from Nigerian sources. A rent in the veil of anonymity that covers most of these unfortunate reveals the names of a small number of female slaves handed over to an official in Sao Tome in May 1528: Caterina Xare, Isabel Ybou, Caterina Equa, Maria Ouziqua, Maria Usobou.<sup>7</sup> This handful of names throws some light on the origins of slaves. Caterina Xare was probably an Ibibio from the right bank of the Cross River.<sup>8</sup> Isabel Ybou was clearly an Igbo, while Caterina Equa and Maria Ouziqua would seem to have belonged to the Kwa of the Cross River area; Maria Usobou can be identified as an Urhobo.

That three of these five women should have come from the Cross River area indicates a shift of the slave trade pattern which is confirmed by other sources. Pacheco Pereira completely omitted the Cross River in his description of the Gulf of Guinea, and we may assume that the Portuguese were doing no trade there at the beginning of the 16th century. That it had become so active a centre of the slave trade two decades later may be explained partly by the shifting of the centre of Portuguese trading operations to the islands in the Gulf,<sup>9</sup> and partly by a change of policy in

7. The names are found in a document preserved in the Portuguese archives, Torre do Tombo, *Corpo Cronologico* II, 148, 79.

8. Cf., G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, Oxford, 1963, p. 21. Jones identifies the Ibibio of this region as those known to Europeans as Agbishere or Egboshari.

9. Not only was the Cross River nearer at hand, but ships sailing there from the islands did not experience the same difficulty in turning against the current as ships sailing to and from the westward.

Benin. Coinciding with the death of Ozolua and the accession of Esigie, a prohibition was placed on the sale of male slaves to Europeans which remained in force for almost two hundred years. The motive behind this embargo cannot have been resolution against the trade, for females continued to be sold without any restriction. Nor is it likely to have been dictated by manpower considerations, otherwise one would not expect healthy young females to have been sold. Probably it was dictated, at least ostensibly, by religious motives. To some extent the decline in the number of slaves taken from Benin was balanced by the opening of a slave market at a village on the Benin River. This place, known to the Portuguese as Oere, was probably an Itsekiri settlement. Even so the total number of slaves shipped from the Benin River seems to have fallen from about 1520 onwards.

Another factor encouraging the slave traders to look to the eastern delta was an increase in the price of slaves in the older markets. At the beginning of the century the price had varied from eight manillas in the Rio Real to twelve in Benin and Ijebu; by 1520 it had risen to between forty and fifty manillas. In the Cross River it was for many years much lower. Unfortunately no detailed accounts of this early trade in the Cross River have survived, so we do not know where it was conducted nor with whom.

The direct shipment of slaves from West Africa to the West Indies began in 1532. Previously they had reached that destination through the slave market at Lisbon, and there was a noticeable increase in the number sent by that route in the decade preceding the opening of the trans-Atlantic trade. Though slaves no longer passed through Europe on their way to America, they were not yet taken directly to the New World. They went first to the island of Sao Tome where they were put to work on the plantations, then shipped across the Atlantic according to demand and the availability of shipping. The effect of using the island as a natural barracoön was to concentrate the slave trade on these parts of the coast most accessible to it, namely the Bight of Biafra (now Bonny) and the coast running south to the Congo River. As far as the Nigerian peoples were concerned, this meant that from around the middle of the 16th century the Portuguese slave trade, which was by then in decline, drew most of its victims from the eastern delta and the Cross River. Benin was abandoned by Portuguese vessels during the second half of the century, and their infrequent trading with the Itsekiri at Ode-Itsekiri involved ivory rather than slaves.

The arrival on the scene of the English in the latter half of the 16th century, and of the Dutch at its close, had no immediate effect on the pattern of the slave trade, for the merchants of these nations were initially seeking ivory and pepper, not slaves. Indeed the latter trade was the only one from which the Portuguese had not been excluded by their European rivals in the first decades of the 17th century. This situation changed rather abruptly when in the 1630s and 40s the Dutch and English developed sugar colonies in the Caribbean and the Portuguese revolt against Spain opened the way for northern Europeans to supply slaves to the Spanish colonies.<sup>10</sup> A scramble for slaves then began with Dutch, English, Spanish, Portuguese and even Swedish merchants joining in. Benin was hardly affected because it sold only a very small number of female slaves. The Itsekiri kingdom too, despite a professed readiness to furnish up to four hundred slaves a year, failed to attract traders. Dutch ships began

10. Cf., K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company*, London, 1957 pp. 14-15.



to visit Ode-Itsekiri in 1644<sup>11</sup> but almost immediately withdrew when their South American colonies demanded Angolan rather than Guinea slaves. The main centre of the trade thus remained where it had been during the Portuguese period, namely in the Rio Real; but the volume of it must have increased dramatically from 1638. Until then the river had been supplying only a trickle of slaves to Sao Tome; <sup>12</sup> perhaps more than a hundred a year. Quite suddenly the demand—and the supply—rose into the thousands.

Almost all these slaves were obtained from New Calabar (Elem Kalabari), the remainder coming from Bille and Ifoko. Bonny appears to have been by-passed. Jones suggests that the reason for the Kalabari's virtual monopoly of this slave-trade boom lay in their advantageous position in relation to the inland markets from which slaves were obtained. Whereas it took the Bonny canoes a week or more to visit the Ndokki markets on the Imo River, the Kalabari could reach their markets up the new Calabar River on a single tide.<sup>13</sup> This meant that a ship could expect to complete its cargo much more quickly at New Calabar than at Bonny. The length of the voyage and the risk of death from sickness among crews and slaves—both vital factors in calculations of profit—were thereby reduced.

While the basic pattern of trade followed that already established in the 16th century, the greatly increased scale of it must have hastened the evolution of those institutions, and especially the canoe house that directed it. The King Owerri Daba, who according to Kalabari tradition introduced the slave trade and founded the house of Duke Monmouth and Duke Africa, may belong to this period.<sup>14</sup> Inland too the growing demand for slaves necessitated an expansion of the slave-getting organization for, as Dapper explains, most of the slaves sold by the Kalabari were not prisoners of war but those "which they bring from their neighbours and these neighbours in their turn buy them from people removed still further to the north". The slaves we may assume to have been still mainly Igbo and Ibibio, but swept up from a wider area than hitherto.

Old Calabar and the Cross River by contrast took little part in the slave-trading of the mid-17th century. Disturbances in the area may partly account for this: Dapper refers to the destruction of trading settlement on the left bank of the Calabar River by the "Ambos",<sup>15</sup> after which the Dutch transferred their trade to the Rio del Rey. But the principal drawbacks seem to have been navigational ones: a sandbank had formed in the main channel, and the coastal current setting strongly towards the Cameroons made it difficult to turn a ship to the westward.

From 1650 onwards the chief European participants in the slave trade were the English, the Dutch West India Company having dropped it almost as hastily as it had earlier taken it up.<sup>16</sup> The English slave trade, monopolized by the Royal African Company from 1672, was thrown open to call comers in 1695, and it has been

11. Dapper's description of the Itsekiri kingdom belongs to that year.

12. A disease of the sugarcane had undermined Sao Tome's plantation economy.

13. Jones, *The Trading States*, p. 38.

14. C.f., K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company*, London, 1969, pp. 206-7.

15. Possibly the Mbiabos, ref. Jones, *The Trading States*, p. 21.

16. C.f. Ryder, *Benin and Europeans*, London, 1969, pp. 206-7.

estimated that between 1672 and 1711 English ships carried some 125,000 slaves from West Africa for the sugar islands of the West India.<sup>17</sup> Probably well under half this number came for the delta markets, but to them must be added perhaps as many again taken by the French Spaniards and Portuguese.

In the last quarter of the 17th century Bonny emerged from eclipse to challenge Kalabari domination of the slave trade in the Rio Real. It was aided by a growing reluctance on the part of ships' captains to spend the five or six weeks needed to collect a cargo anchored off New Calabar. Instead they preferred to lie near the river mouth where the crews were less exposed to mosquitoes. As early as 1678 an English ship, the *Arthur*, anchored three miles up the river and waited there for the King of New Calabar to come aboard to negotiate the price of slaves or "break trade" as this bargaining procedure came to be known.<sup>18</sup> Barbot confirms that most ships began to ride at Ifoko even while trading with New Calabar. Taking advantage of this development, the people of Bonny were able to compete more effectively with the Kalabari even though they had still to send their canoes on journeys of nine or ten days to gather slaves and provisions. By 1699 the trading system at Bonny, as described by the English merchant James Barbot, closely resembled that of New Calabar with a 'King William' (clearly a post-1688 designation) and a number of chiefs coming aboard to fix the terms of trade.<sup>19</sup> Yet though there was rivalry for trade between Bonny, New Calabar and also Andoni, it had not at this stage provoked hostility; pre-occupation with a flourishing trade seems temporarily to have halted the traditional feuding among the Ijo communities of the delta. In the course of the 18th century, however, this amity became strained and there ensued long periods of warfare associated in Bonny tradition with the reign of Perukule and in that of the Kalabari with Amakiri. Jones maintains that this conflict did not take the form of direct confrontation between Bonny and New Calabar, but that it resulted from the efforts of these two states to secure their trading routes to the interior by the subjugation of Okrika and Andoni respectively. The volume of European trade was sufficient to sustain economy of both states despite the development of the canoe-house system with its need for constant expansion.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of the 18th century the trade of Bonny had far outstripped that of New Calabar. Captain Adams estimated the number of slaves sold at Bonny annually to be "no fewer than 20,000", of whom 16,000 were Igbo. New and Old Calabar together had sold, he reckoned, no more than 50,000 Igbo slaves in the space of twenty years. His figures may well be very inaccurate, but there can be little doubt where most of the slave trading was done, and this despite the fact that the Bonny canoes had still to undertake a journey inland of six days or more to procure their slaves. And that relations between Bonny and New Calabar were far from friendly is evident from the accounts of the Bonny destruction of Calabar retailed to Adams.<sup>21</sup> There can be no doubt that a major reversal of

17. Davies, *The Royal African Company*, p. 299.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 230 C.f., Jones, *The Trading States*, p. 92.

19. C.f., Jones, *The Trading States*, p. 91.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

21. "He (i.e., the King of Bonny) has destroyed the town of New Calabar twice, and boasts of having eaten part of the heart of its king . . . New Calabar was formerly an independent state, and a number of vessels obtained there are cargoes of slaves; but at this time, the inhabitants are compelled to take their merchandise to Bonny for sale . . ." Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives*, p. 180.

fortunes had occurred during the 18th century. How was Bonny able to gather together so vast a number of slaves despite the relative disadvantage of distance from the interior markets? It may be that the rise of the "Long Juju" of Arochuku played a part here by co-ordinating slave-gathering far inland to feed the Imo River markets. Old Calabar, though conveniently placed for access to Arochuku, was evidently not disposing of many slaves in Adam's day, for he found the slave trade there overshadowed by palm-oil and barwood.

In the western delta also the 18th century saw a notable expansion of the slave trade, though never to the volume of the Rio Real. Abandoning the long-standing prohibition on the sale of male slaves, the Oba of Benin sold a considerable number of war captives to England and French slavers, but there is no evidence to show that Benin ever organized a systematic slave trade in the manner of the eastern delta states. Most of the slaves Europeans bought in the Benin River they obtained in fact from the Itsekiri rather than from Benin. Itsekiri settlements, notably Bobi, Salt Town and Eghoro, were founded in the Benin River in the last quarter of the 18th century partly to produce salt for sale inland, and partly to take advantage of growing trade in slaves and ivory, for experience had shown that ships' captains were reluctant to undertake the difficult river navigation as far as Ode-Itsekiri.<sup>22</sup> The initiative in founding the villages seems to have come from the leading Itsekiri chiefs, but they were at this time closely controlled by the Olu; in the 19th century they were to become the masters of virtually independent trading communities.

One of the reasons for the enormous expansions of the Niger delta slave trade in the 18th century had been the onslaught of Dahomey on important centres of the trade farther to the west. Early in the century the greatest slaving ports in West Africa had probably been those of Allada, Whydah and Jakin: within a few years all three fell to the armies of Agaja.<sup>23</sup> The initial disruption of trade caused by these conquests drove many ships to the delta ports. It also led to hostility between Dahomey and Oyo, and a movement eastward of refugees from the defeated states, sometimes accompanied by those European agents with whom they had traded. These circumstances encouraged the growth of new markets far enough to the east to be out of reach of the Dahomeans and yet still accessible to ocean-going ships.<sup>24</sup> By 1736 a considerable number of these fugitives had settled at Badagry and Porto Novo under the protection of Oyo. The Dutch, English and Portuguese had trading posts there buying slaves and ivory; French and Brazilian ships were also frequenting the port. In that same year Hendrik Hertog, agent of the Dutch West India Company at Badagry, was making preparations to establish a post at 'Rio Lago'. It may be that he had Lagos in mind; if so this is the earliest reference to trade there in the 18th century.<sup>25</sup> However, it was

22. When Captain Landolphe's ship *La Charmante Louise* was taken to the Itsekiri capital in 1783 he had to rely upon Itsekiri canoes to tow it through the creeks.

23. Allada in 1724, Whydah in 1727 and Jakin in 1732.

24. Ref. I.A. Akinjogbin, *dahomey and its Neighbours* 1708-1818, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 91-92.

25. The reference is to be found in the archives of the West India Company preserved in the Algemein Rijksarchief at the Hague: *Bezittingen ter Kuste van Guinea*, Vol. 102, letter from Hertog dated Badagry, 18 October 1736. He mentions that the site of the new post is about one day's journey from Badagry. A Dutch ship has unsuccessfully attempted to reconnoitre the entrance to the Lagos lagoon in 1716, but had found it impossible to cross the bar. (ref. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, p. 157).

probably not until rather later in the century that Lagos became an active centre of the slave trade, for the appearance there of Portuguese slavers is traditionally ascribed to the reign of Akinsemoyin.<sup>26</sup> A list of slave ships calling at Principe on the way to Brazil between 1760 and 1770 records none bound for Lagos earlier than 1766.<sup>27</sup> The destruction of Badagry, engineered by Oyo in 1784, did much to stimulate the trade of Lagos which reached full flood following the decline of Porto Novo.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter, that is to say from about 1810, Lagos became the principal outlet for the slave trade of the Yoruba states.

Slave trade statistics have been a notorious subject of polemic for almost two centuries. Much of the controversy has centred on the calculation of global figures which can never, in the nature of things, be more than gross approximations, and in themselves not particularly meaningful. However, trends can be plotted with some accuracy and indications of scale can be given. A first phase running from about 1480 to about 1630 probably reached its peak in the period 1515 to 1540 with the number of slaves taken from the Benin River and Rio Real reaching a total of some two thousand in exceptional years. The next phase from 1630 to around 1730 saw all the European slave-trading states seeking cargoes from the eastern delta, and to a lesser extent from Old Calabar and Andoni. The number of slaves sold in this period varied greatly from year to year with conditions in the trading states, in Europe and in the Americas; in some years the total may have exceeded five thousand, but the average would fall much below this figure. A third phase began with the opening of the Yoruba slave ports and the ascendancy of Bonny in the delta; it may be said to have ended when legislative and naval action against the trade began to take effect almost one hundred years after. If Adams' figure of 20,000 slaves sold annually at Bonny is anywhere near the mark, the overall total for all ports in the period must have approached an annual peak of 30,000.

All but an insignificant number of these captives came from within the present day boundary of Nigeria, and the majority from the hinterland of the slave-trading states – that is to say from the regions south of the Niger-Benue. Not until the late 18th century did Hausa and other peoples north of the Niger begin to appear in appreciable numbers in the slave cargoes from Lagos, Badagry and Porto Novo. Yoruba too, though some were sold through Allada and Whydah in the 17th century, were carried across the Atlantic in substantial numbers only in the latter part of the 18th and in the first decades of the 19th century. The relatively late establishment of the western slave ports combined with the upheavals in Yorubaland that followed the breakup of the Oyo empire would explain this development. What evidence we have suggests that the slaves taken from the delta ports came overwhelmingly from the Igbo and Ibibio peoples. The number of Ekoi among them was relatively small. But as the scale of the delta slave trade expanded so too presumably did the area from which it drew its human material. Thus when Laird and Oldfield visited the Niger they saw traders from Bonny buying large numbers of slaves, most of them Nupe, at the Ikiri market. They believed that the majority of the 11,000 slaves sold there annually found

26. Ref. R.S. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, London, 1969, pp. 93-94.

27. Ref. P. Verger, *Babia and the West Coast (1549-1851)*, Ibadan, 1964, pp. 25-26.

28. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, p. 168.

their way to the coast. Through such markets and the trade routes that linked state to state the slave trade at its height spread its tentacles over a great area of Nigeria, stimulating the existing network of slave-trading and orientating it towards the coast. As a result the slave trade in the Nigerian states assumed three dimensions: the domestic trade, the long-established trans-Saharan traffic, and the relatively new trans-Atlantic traffic. As the latter trade developed it probably began to divert some slave traffic away from the Saharan routes, as had happened with gold when Europeans began buying it on the Guinea coast, but it is likely that the competition was as keen as with the precious metal because the Saharan trade demanded relatively few slaves.

Making due allowance for an enlargement of the area from which slaves were gathered *pari passu* with the growth of the trade, it is nevertheless evident that the greatest impact of the slave trade over a period of three centuries was concentrated on quite a small area fringing the coast. It has also to be remembered that those sold as slaves were drawn from a restricted age group. A slave trader would never buy a child below the age of puberty nor an adult who was old or showed any physical defect. Age was, of course, a matter of rough estimation, but was generally reckoned at an upper limit of thirty to forty years to exclude those past the prime of physical fitness.

One might expect a continued heavy drain on this virile section of the population—a drain such as the Igbo and Ibibio must have experienced from about 1700—to have led to depopulation of the areas affected. This did not happen; on the contrary, the area most afflicted by the slave trade emerged into the 19th century as one of the most densely populated in West Africa. Large-scale migration, whether forced or voluntary, seems from this and other historical examples to be much less important as a factor regulating population than are established society conventions such as the size of family and the age of marriage.

Those states and peoples which acted as intermediaries in the slave trade may be divided into two broad categories: those for which the trade was but a marginal concern, and those in which it became a major and sometimes dominant economic activity. In the first category fall the kingdoms of Benin, Oyo and Ijebu. There has, it is true, been some debate on the part played by the slave trade in the decline of Oyo towards the end of the 18th century. Akinjogbin has maintained that "Abiodun's neglect of the army and his subordination of the other economic activities to the needs of the slave trade must have been among the important factors in this decline".<sup>29</sup> Smith on the other hand argues that there is no positive evidence to support this view other than a shift of "economic interest and wealth from the north of the kingdom to the extreme south-west, removed from the capital".<sup>30</sup> All authorities would certainly agree that the effects of the slave trade were, at most, but one among several forces at work in the collapse of the Oyo kingdom. As for Benin, there is no cause to believe that the external slave trade played any significant part in either the growth or the decline of the state.

With the second category of states the case is somewhat different. Though most of them developed from settlements that antedated the slave trade, their power and

29. *Dahomey and its Neighbours*, p. 164.

30. R. S. Smith, "Event and Portent: the fall of Old Oyo, a problem in historical explanation", *Africa*, Vol. XLI, No. 3, July 1971, p. 193.



importance were inextricably bound up with it. One might, therefore, enquire whether the thesis advanced by Rodney for the upper Guinea coast holds good here. Did it produce chaos in relations between states and "the exploitation of the majority of the society by the dominant layer" within states?<sup>31</sup> Trade rivalry undoubtedly engendered war among neighbouring states: Lagos against Badagry, Bonny against Andoni and New Calabar against Okrika, to cite only a few of the conflicts of which we have some knowledge. From the 18th century onwards the slave trade also supplied the weapons that made these conflicts more destructive. Some wars were launched with little motive other than slave raiding. Internally a sharpening of divisions within societies is well attested. Trade demanded and produced a relatively small group of men each disposing of the resources (canoe, rowers, agents, capital) needed to furnish a large and regular supply of slaves. European traders also needed in most states "a supreme administrative head who had the authority to negotiate with them the conditions under which they conducted their trade, and the power to see that these conditions were adhered to by the members of this community".<sup>32</sup> There resulted a considerable loss of freedom for the rest of the community. "The fisherman who went where he wished in his fishing canoe became the 'pullaboy' in a large trade canoe. Every aspect of the lives of such men from womb to tomb was subject to the control of the Head of the House to which he belongs".<sup>33</sup> Secret societies such as the *Ekpe* of the Efik and the *Koronogbo* of New Calabar imposed conformity, especially upon those newly recruited as slaves into the system. And while it is true that such societies were open to the extent that the acculturated slaves were fully absorbed, and that some rose by this means to prominence in them, it must be conceded that those thus retained were only a tiny fraction of the flow of slaves that fed the slave ships, and that they could gain a sort of freedom only by becoming part of the system that preyed upon their fellow countrymen. We may also wonder how discriminatingly the 'Long Juju' of Arochuku dispensed justice once it became conscious of the insatiable demands of the slave ports. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that what were formerly petty crimes or misdemeanours became grounds for enslavement.<sup>34</sup> On those who lived by it as well as on those who suffered it the slave trade wrought havoc and debasement.

The economic balance sheet of the slave trade is not easily drawn. The most obvious item on the debit side is the loss of many thousand men and women taken away in their prime. Yet it cannot be affirmed with any certainty that large-scale emigration, even when involuntary, is an economic handicap, unless it can be shown that depopulation and shortage of labour result. As mentioned earlier, this does not seem to have happened in the areas of Nigeria most affected by the Atlantic slave trade. From this overall view one can however descend to the level of the family, village or town which must have suffered disaster, whether temporary or permanent, from the loss of its young men and women. Emphasis on the slave trade led those states most actively engaged in it to develop dangerously unbalanced one — commodity economies, for a

31. W. Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-188*, Oxford, 1970, p. 257.

32. Jones, *The Trading States*, p. 178.

33. Alagoa, "Development of Institutions", p. 274.

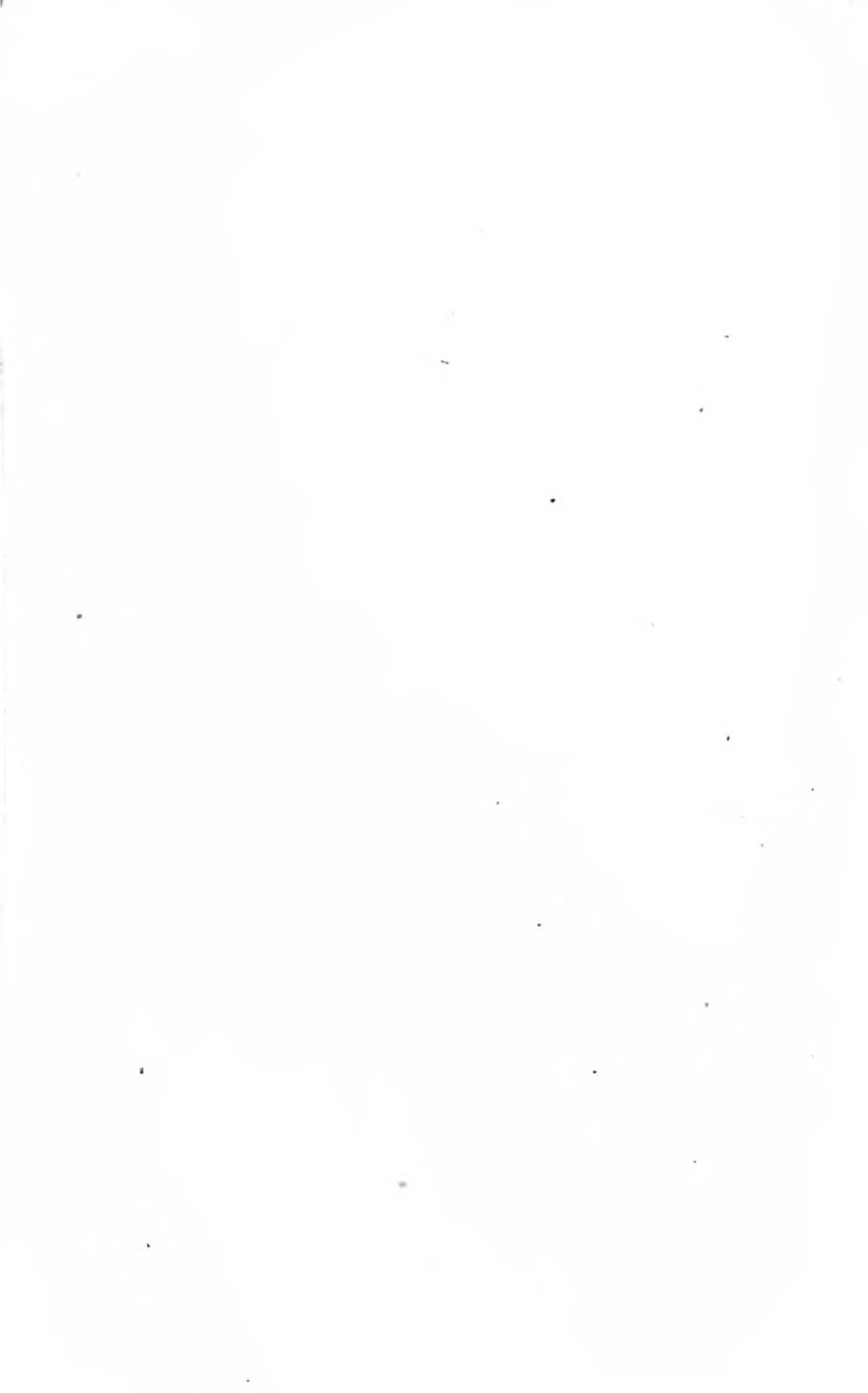
34. Cf., J.C. Anene, *Southern Nigerian in Transition 1885-1906*, Cambridge, 1906, p. 17. "Another major source of the Aro slave supply was judicial litigation which took place in the sacred grove of Arochukwu, where the guilty were seized and undoubtedly sold as slaves".

certain amount of trade in ivory did little to diminish their almost complete dependence on slaving. Moreover these were essentially 'middleman' economies whose viability lay at the mercy of their inland suppliers and European customers. How vulnerable they were was clearly demonstrated by the ending of the slave trade. yet many of these states had accumulated the capital and experience which carried them successfully over the watershed. Long years of shrewd trading had given a sizeable merchant class a close acquaintance with the ways of European business, and this they were able to turn to account in developing a market in 'legitimate' commodities. It is true that the goods they received in return for their slaves were mostly consumer goods, not capital, but despite some conspicuous consumption, they did not consume them all; rather they used them as trading capital. This class of men played an important part in ensuring that the colonial economy of Nigeria did not fall so completely into alien hands as happened, for example, in East Africa.

From the technological point of view the slave trade did little to advance those Nigerians involved in it. Some must have acquired mechanical skills from acquaintance with such imported devices as firearms and clocks. More important was the opportunity offered by the import of large quantities of iron and brass. A lot of it came in the form of manufactured articles—cauldrons, basins, manillas—but much came as unworked rods or bars which provided raw material for the local metal-worker who seems, from the archaeological evidence, to have suffered from a metal famine before the advent of European suppliers. Metal goods and tools thus became more plentiful, and the durable metals (brass and copper) became more readily available for the use of craftsmen. However, of more fundamental economic importance was the introduction, during the slave-trade era, of two vital subsistence crops—maize and cassava. The first appeared near the beginning of the era, the second towards its end, and both were probably brought from the Americas for the purpose of feeding slaves on the trans-Atlantic voyage. Together they revolutionized the feeding and farming habits of the Nigerian peoples. In these two plants we may have the answer to a seeming paradox: the rapid growth of population in a land ravaged by the slave trade.

### **III**

## **Nigeria in the 19th Century**



## THE EASTERN NIGER DELTA AND THE HINTERLAND IN THE 19TH CENTURY

E. J. ALAGOA

The discussion in this chapter has been organized around three sub-regions: the eastern delta states, the Efik states of Calabar on the Cross River estuary and basin, and finally, the great Igbo hinterland behind both coastal regions. The inter-actions between these three regions must constitute one of the important historical factors of Nigerian history. In addition, the pre-19th century developments within each region, as well as their peculiar cultural structures determined the manner in which the external influences were adapted and moderated in the 19th century.

It is important to stress these internal factors for change as well as for continuity, since the impact of external forces has received greater emphasis hitherto. However, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. It is important to keep in focus the primacy of internal determinants of change even while enumerating the external stimulants.

The agents of external influence in the area in the 19th century may be listed as follows: first, the merchants of various European nations with the British predominating; second, the missionaries beginning operations in Calabar, and later in the Niger Delta and along the Niger; and third, the official British presence represented by naval officers, consuls, and eventually colonial administrators. In spite of conflicts in the details concerning the methods of their operations, these agents generally co-operated towards the end of taking control of the economic, political and spiritual forces of the eastern Niger Delta and its hinterland.

Of the motives to action the one most loudly advertised by the official agents was the desire to stop the overseas slave trade. The humanitarian anxiety to terminate the suffering of the victims of the trade was strong among some British abolitionists. But it is now realized that the movement gained official support mainly because of the practical needs of the British economy. That is, that by the beginning of the 19th century, Britain had already created capital out of the slave trade and its American plantations, and this capital launched the Industrial Revolution.<sup>1</sup> The slave trade was, accordingly, no longer vital to the British economy; whereas the palm-oil and kernels of the Niger Delta and its hinterland were required by British industry.

1. K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-85*, London 1956, p. 3. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Chapell Hill, 1944.



The desire to effectively stop the slave trade led to new initiatives on the part of the British traders and officials, and to new relationships with the local rulers. First, it resulted in the increase of British official presence on the West African coast. In 1827 a naval presence was established at Fernando Po, and in 1849 John Beecroft was appointed the first British Consul over the Bights of Benin and Biafra (now Bonny). In the event, the local populations on the coast were treated to increasingly frequent demonstrations of British naval power in the form of seizures of slaving ships, and gunboat raids on local states. Further, the local authorities were persuaded, through the use of force and the offer of financial reward, to sign treaties of amity, banning the slave trade and regulating 'legitimate' trade. For the local people these activities led at the end of the 19th to complete loss of sovereignty. But this loss was gradual for the coastal communities, and was brought about by the intervention of the British traders in their Courts of Equity, the activities of the missionaries, and the official treaties.

In the economic field, the abolition of the slave trade gradually produced the switch to the palm-oil trade. This change was difficult, involving as it did new methods of trade. For the coastal trading states, it meant a need to penetrate deeper into the hinterland. And since each of the coastal states was expanding its trade area, there were more trade wars between states during the 19th century. In turn, these wars, and the labour-intensive nature of the palm-oil trade meant that the coastal states required more manpower. The abolition of the overseas slave trade, therefore, did not mean an end to the internal slave trade and slavery. It would seem, in fact that the internal slave trade increased in the 19th century, judging from the accelerated growth of new lineage or house units in the delta states. The British too began to make more attempts to penetrate the hinterland. Explorers were encouraged, and after the Lander brothers found the Niger route in 1830, subsidies were granted to steamship companies and traders, such as Macgregor Laird, to follow up the 'discovery'. This increased British activity in the hinterland, of course, led to the well-known clashes with the coastal trading states, such as the confrontation with Jaja of Opobo in 1887.

Of the external agents of change, the Christian missions represented the most subtle attack on local institutions. The Presbyterians in Calabar from 1846, the Church Missionary Society under the leadership of Bishop Ajayi Crowther at Bonny from 1864, Nembe from 1868, Elem Kalabari from 1874, and Okrika from 1880, and up the Niger valley from about 1856, obtained local support, and even invitations. These invitations to the missionaries were sent for imagined material benefits to be derived from them. Western education had been identified as probably the most important motive for Igbo acceptance of Christian missions.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes coastal rulers invited missionaries as a way of attracting trade, and of winning the friendship of the British. Other rulers invited missionaries to get even with neighbouring states which had acquired missions, although Jaja of Opobo refused the attentions of the Church Missionary Society because it had its delta headquarters in the rival state of Bonny.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the initial expectations of those who invited the missionaries, most

2. F.K. Ekechi, 'Colonialism and Christianity in West Africa: the Igbo case, 1900-1915', *Journal of African History*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 103-15.

3. E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*, London, pp. 84-5. E.J. Alagoa, *The small Brave City*—for a contrary explanation.

scholars have noted that missionary activities resulted in internal divisions and disruptions. It has, indeed, been claimed that in the coastal states of the eastern delta and Calabar, the Christian missions liberated slaves who then turned against their masters.<sup>4</sup> The role of Christianity in the political revolutions of these states in the 19th century is discussed below. But it may be stated here that Christian missions were opposed by all the traditionalist elements in all these societies. They were soon recognized to be a threat to the stability of the basic institutions and values of the communities.

### **The Eastern Delta Slaves**

The abolition of the overseas slave trade was probably the most dramatic factor for a change of the economic system of the delta states in the 19th century. The effects of abolition began to be apparent from the 1830s when the British preventive squadron from Fernando Po captured ships at some of these ports. In 1836 an attempt by the chiefs of Bonny to protect a Spanish slaver resulted in the first confrontation between the British and a delta state. The superiority of British naval power was massively demonstrated, and the officers interfered in local politics by placing King William Dappa Pepple firmly on his throne over the opposition of senior slaving chiefs. They also signed the first anti-slave trade treaty with a delta state.

The slave trade continued to be pursued on remote estuaries such as the Brass River, which were not very accessible to the British naval patrol at Fernando Po. But by the close of the fifth decade of the century, John Beecroft had signed abolition treaties with all the important slave trading states, and succeeded in making the trade unattractive.<sup>5</sup> Abolition meant that the rulers of these states had to switch from trade in slaves to trade in palm-oil. The change in the economic system provided a challenge to the old trading establishment, and opportunities for the emergence of new men. The change in the trade pattern was evident at the ports. At Bonny, Elem Kalabari, and on the Brass River at Twon, the white supercargoes began to set up shore establishments. The various trading firms now sent resident local representatives to collect produce and ship them out when necessary. Since palm-oil was more difficult to transport overland than slaves, the delta middlemen had to go closer to the places of production. They needed more canoes, more men to pull the canoes and protect the goods against pirates, competitors, and rival trading states.

Nembe traders went up the Niger as far as the head of the Niger at Aboh. By marrying into or establishing friendships with local families they were able to acquire bases at which produce from the hinterland was collected to be carried to the Brass River. Other Nembe traders established depots at other Niger Igbo towns such as Osomari on the east bank. It would seem that Nembe traders did not pass beyond Aboh to Onitsha and to the Igala country in large numbers. Rather, produce from north of Aboh and from most of the Isoko and western Igbo country was collected through Aboh middlemen. As Nembe traders expanded north-eastwards in the Oguta Lake region and into the Orashi River, they clashed with traders from the state of

4. K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics*, pp. 153-65.

5. Treaties were signed with Bonny in 1836, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1848, and 1850; with Elem Kalabari in 1850; and with Nembe (Brass) in 1856.

Elem Kalabari, also expanding north-westwards. Elem Kalabari also clashed with Bonny expansion into the southern section of this trade area, in Ekpeye and Abua country, and also in the Ikwerre country around Isokpo. Bonny was forced, accordingly, to seek markets further to the east, up the Imo River valley in Ndoki country and beyond. Bonny also collected produce from the Ogoni country, sometimes through Okrika traders. This extended trade route through Andoni country entailed long wars in which Bonny sought to establish a right of free passage. Nember had similar problems in her long route through the delta to Aboh and beyond.

Up to about 1870, the palm-oil trade of the eastern Niger Delta was carried on at three principal bases, namely, Bonny, Elem Kalabari, and the port of Twon on the Brass River. The Rio Real, the combined estuary of the New Calabar and Bonny Rivers was, accordingly, the principal oil river of the Niger Delta, which accounted for over three quarters of the entire African export of palm-oil.<sup>6</sup>

In 1870, however Jaja founded the town of Opobo on the estuary of the Imo River. This effectively siphoned off most of the Bonny oil supplies from the Ndoki and western Ibibio countries. In the last three decades of the 19th century, therefore, Opobo superseded Bonny as the principal oil exporting city-state of the Niger Delta. This situation also forced Bonny into more intense contests with the Elem Kalabari for markets.

The changes in the economic system produced disturbances of the political life of some of the eastern delta states in the course of the 19th century. These disturbances have been wrongly called slave revolts.<sup>7</sup> According to this interpretation, the slaves in these states came of age by mid-century and became "the richest traders, bravest soldiers, and ablest commanders". They also realized that the economic well-being of the states depended on their efforts. Finally, the introduction of Christianity liberated the slaves enough by mid-century to take action to emancipate themselves through revolts. Even a cursory analysis of the particular cases of political upheaval in these delta states would reveal that they represented, in fact, struggles for power caused by changes in the balance of economic power, between the traditional lineage or House units.

Bonny suffered from great political unrests for most of the first half of the century, culminating in the secession of a section of the royal lineage to Opobo. The political contest was between the two royal lineages of Fubara Manilla Pepple and of Opobo Anna Pepple. From 1837 when King William Dappa Pepple seized control of the monarchy, the Anna Pepple group was up in arms, and even got Consul Beecroft to send the king away on exile in 1854. Unfortunately, their own candidate, Dapuye Fubara did not last more than a month. By the time King William Dappa Pepple returned from exile in 1861, the Anna Pepple group was under the leadership of an exceptionally able former slave, Jaja. It is this slave leadership of the opposition that has led some scholars to mistake the political tussle within Bonny as a slave revolt. On the other hand, the leading spirit in the Manilla Pepple camp was also a former slave, Chief Oko Jumbo.

Thus, when Jaja left Bonny for Opobo in 1869/70 he led out the free and slave

6. Dike, *Trade and Politics*, p. 101.

7. Dike, *Trade and Politics*, pp. 153-65.

members of the Opubo Anna Pepple lineage of Bonny. He was not leader of a slave revolt against freemen. Further, the leaders of the Fubara Manilla Pepple Houses attacked Jaja and his group because of the challenge they posed to the ruling House. It was clear that the Opubo Anna Pepple group was making spectacular progress in the new palm-oil trade and was incorporating into their group poorer and weaker Houses. Finally, Jaja did not set up a freed slave republic at Opobo. Rather, he established a new state on the model of Bonny and the other eastern delta states complete with the political and social structures of the older states.

From 1882-84 Elem Kalabari also experienced political disturbances on the scale of the Bonny-Opobo crisis of 1869-70. Here it was Will Braide who led the Barboy House in opposition to the Amakiri ruling dynasty. As in Bonny, the power struggle issued in a civil war, and the moving of the Barboy to found a new settlement at Bakana. The fissures created by the civil war were such that the rest of Elem Kalabari also moved out of the city and settled in the two new cities of Buguma and Abonnema.

There was no disturbance of similar dimensions in the states of Nembe and Okrika during the 19th century. A quarrel over the burial rites for King Ockiya in 1879 at Nembe has, however, been wrongly interpreted as a slave revolt.<sup>8</sup> It was, in fact, a case of the traditionalists insisting on the ancient rites, and the Christian faction fighting to observe Christian rites of burial. In the end, it was agreed to perform both rites, since the king had been baptised on his death-bed.

A number of reasons may be suggested for the fact that Bonny and Elem Kalabari experienced political revolutions in the 19th century, while Nembe and Okrika were spared such disturbances. First, it seems significant that the overseas trade in palm-oil was not carried on at Nembe and Okrika to the same extent as it was at Bonny and Elem Kalabari. That is, differential accumulation of wealth may not have reached the same level in these two states to encourage rival claimants to the supreme leadership of the states. But more important, both Nembe and Okrika had experienced changes in dynasty in the previous century when Mingi (of Nembe) and Ado (of Okrika) came to power. In each state, the rival group was not eliminated, and a state of equilibrium had developed in the 19th century. Similar changes of dynasty had occurred in Bonny and Elem Kalabari with the rise to power of Perekule (Pepple I) and Amakiri respectively. In these cases, the rival groups had been reduced to political impotence. Accordingly, fission developed within the new dynasties themselves during the 19th century.

The 1880s saw an intensification of British interference in the affairs of the eastern delta states. In 1885 Britain proclaimed a protectorate over the area, and from that date Britain progressively refined administrative structures to effect control. British attempts to deprive the delta states of sovereignty did not go unchallenged. Jaja's conflict with the British in the 1880s was similar to the efforts of the state of Nembe over much of the 19th century to keep British traders out of the Niger valley. Jaja's struggle was thus the high point of a peaceful, diplomatic type of resistance to British commercial and political penetration of the coastal states into the hinterland. The states of Nembe and Okrika were to resort to violent confrontation in the last decade

8. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*, London, 1966, pp. 84-85; E.J. Alagoa, *The Small Bravy City*—for contrary explanation.



of the century. In 1895 King Koko of Nembe attacked the main depot of the Royal Niger Company on the lower Delta at Akassa for its trade monopoly on the Niger. This led to reprisals from the government of the Niger Coast Protectorate and to the establishment of colonial administration. In 1898, King Ibanichuka of Okrika defied the authority of the protectorate government, and was deported. King Koko died in 1898 in the remote village to which he had exiled himself rather than submit to the British authorities.

The new situation of British take-over created changes that have passed into the 20th century. First, the British government took over the sovereign powers of the kings. The kings could no longer collect *comey* or trade duties, rather the British colonial administration paid subsidies in lieu of *comey* to each state in proportion to the volume of the palm-oil trade passing through it. In most of the states, even this subsidy was in dispute, and was divided among several chiefs. The British overthrow of the kings led to a long interregnum and a kind of atrophy of the institution in the first decades of the 20th century.

Second, the House lineage system was affected by the new political order. The corporate economic base of the institution disappeared, to be replaced by individual enterprise. The heads of the House too lost their independent political authority, and became members of the colonial Native Councils, thus ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the British political officer. The House institution became more of a lineage-type institution for defining inter-personal and group relationships and no longer an effective economic and political corporation.

Generally, too, the eastern delta states lost their focal significance, as the British moved their commercial and administrative apparatus into the hinterland. The coastal states were no longer the strategic arbiters of what went into the hinterland after the 19th century.

### **Calabar and the Cross River Valley**

European traders at Calabar in the Cross River estuary operated on the same basis as at the eastern delta ports. The change from the slave to the palm-oil trade encouraged similar changes in the pattern of trade and greater foreign intervention in local politics. Its proximity to Fernando Po, and the single entrance to the port made it easier for the Preventive Squadron to stop the slave trade at Calabar. By 1842, a definitive abolition treaty had been signed, and an annual subsidy agreed to be paid by the British government.

Calabar also got a virile Christian mission before the delta states.<sup>9</sup> The Church of Scotland Mission established a small self-governing colony in Creek Town and Duke Town of five to six white missionaries, teachers, and other staff. It played an active part in social and political change in Calabar in the 19th century by serving as a sanctuary for refugees from the local social and political system; through moral influence and propaganda; and by reporting the local situation to the British consul and supercargoes.

9. H. Goldie, *Calabar and its mission*, Edinburgh, 1890; H.M. Waddell, *Twenty-nine years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, London, 1863; D.M. McFarlan, *Calabar*, London, 1946.



Efik traders of Calabar operated along the valley of the Cross River as middlemen traders in the produce of the hinterland people in much the same way that the delta middlemen operated on the Niger and the hinterland. The town of Itu on the Cross River served as a major collecting point for trade from the Igbo hinterland brought down by the Aro, who themselves operated a wide network of trade routes and markets throughout Igboland. Umon, Agwa Aguna (Akunakuna), and other riverain peoples brought down produce from farther up-river. Thus intermediaries of the trading town of Ikom sold canoes from the country; and palm-oil, ivory, wild, rubber, and yams from the upper Cross River.<sup>10</sup> Ikom also lay on the slave-route from Bamenda in the Cameroons, and served as a centre for trade between the Cross River valley and the Cameroons.

Cross River trade, like delta trade, developed a general purpose currency in the copper rod and copper wire before the 19th century. This facilitated the storage of wealth and the accumulation of capital. But the palm-oil trade did not lead to great capitalistic production or establishments in either the delta states or in Calabar. Palm-oil was collected from wild trees by individual peasant collectors. When cocoa was introduced to Calabar in 1870, there arose the prospect of capitalist production in slave plantations.<sup>11</sup> But Calabar cocoa proved to be poor quality and prone to disease. Its production came to an end with the price slump during the First World War. Profit in the palm-oil trade was invested in slaves. Thus one of the Obong or kings of Calabar, Duke Ephraim, peopled a whole village, Akpabuyo, with his slaves "to strengthen the power of his House or ward".<sup>12</sup> It was such slave villages that 19th century European visitors called 'plantations'. The slaves in these villages, however, were not necessarily employed in agricultural production. They were mainly considered a store of wealth and potential labour force, defence force, status symbol, and sometimes were used for ritual sacrifice. These local uses of slaves meant that the abolition of the overseas slave trade did not spell the death of domestic slavery and slave trade.

The 19th century saw significant developments in some of the central Efik institutions. Kingship, for example, became an established institution among the Efik from the beginning of the century. Thus Duke Ephraim (Efion Edem), about 1800-34, emerged as a paramount political leader of Duke Town. Eyo Honesty I of Creek Town occupied a similar position in that town until his death in about 1820. Both men established themselves over the claims of other men of comparable lineage connection because of superior wealth and power acquired from trade in slaves and palm-oil. In spite of the emergence of supreme political leadership however, the newness of the institution left it open to external pressures. The identification of the office with the external trade also led to arbitration by the supercargoes, consul and missionaries in succession disputes. The point was that the king had few traditional functions and authority, most of his activities being concerned with the overseas trade.

10. R. Harris, "The history of trade at Ikom, Eastern Nigeria", *Africa*, Vol. XLII, No. 2, 1972, 122-39.

11. A.J.H. Latham, "Currency, credit and capitalism on the Cross River in the pre-colonial era", *Journal of African History*, Vol. XII, No. 4, 1971, p. 604.

12. Latham, "Currency, credit . . .", p. 604.

Thus, he collected the *comey* or customs dues, granted rights of mooring and trade, and set in motion the traditional judicial processes when so desired. His main function then, was to stand between the local communities and the white community.

The emergence of two kings over the Efik communities on the Cross River at Duke Town and Creek Town too did not improve their ability to resist the pressures from the British traders, consuls, and missionaries. The King of Duke Town maintained a position of paramountcy, since he usually held, in addition, the highest *Ekpe* title of *Eyamba* over all Efik. The supercargoes recognized this by paying Duke Ephraim of Duke Town (1800-34) the largest share of *comey*, dividing the remainder among the other chiefs. After him, however, Eyo Honesty II of Creek Town (1835-58) began to receive as much as two thirds of the *comey* from 1852, releasing only a third to the rulers of Duke Town.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the visitors were willing to exploit the situation in their own interest.

In addition to the parallel authority of Creek Town, the rulers of Duke Town were weakened by succession disputes. Few disputes are recorded for Creek Town since the rival lineage of Akabom had migrated and left the town in the hands of Eyo Honesty. In Duke Town there was mortal conflict between the Duke and Eyamba lineages at the death of each king. The contest was deadly, since the principal weapon used was to accuse members of the rival lineage of witchcraft, such person being then forced to undergo the *esere* bean poison ordeal.<sup>14</sup> Thus when Duke Ephraim died in 1834, the Eyamba accused fifty members of the Duke lineage, and by this means eliminated all the possible contenders in the rival group. Eyamba V then obtained both offices of *Obong* (king) and *Eyamba*. At the death of Eyamba V in 1847, the missionaries wished to recognize Eyo II of Creek Town sole authority of the Cross River, but the supercargoes preferred to retain the dual kingship. They approved Archibong I of the Duke group, who managed to retain the office through the combined use of witchcraft accusations and the support of the British supercargoes and consul. But in 1878, the use of poison ordeal was abolished by treaty, and when Archibong II died in 1879, there was a three-cornered struggle between an Eyamba, Duke, and Archibong. British intervention therefore became more significant than ever in the appointment of a king in Calabar after 1879.

In spite of these succession disputes the Calabar state did not break up in the 19th century the way Bonny and Elem Kalabari did. This may be explained in part by the comparative lack of authority of the ruler of Calabar in internal politics. In internal affairs, the *Ekpe* society was the real executive authority, and every rich freeborn Efik was a member of *Ekpe*, and shared in its power. Accordingly, it was not necessary for the losers in the contest for the kingship to resort to civil war or secession.

In its village setting *Ekpe* had comprised all elders and male citizens. But in the affluent city environment of Calabar, *Ekpe* began to show more and more differentiation of class, and increased the numbers of grades. An 1828 report had listed only five grades in *Ekpe*, but a recent account says there are as many as twenty-three grades.<sup>15</sup> Slaves were originally excluded, but third generation slaves born

13. D. Forde, (ed.), *Efik Traders of Old Calabar*, London, 1956, p. 131.

14. A. J. H. Latham, "Witchcraft accusation and economic tension in pre-colonial Old Calabar", *Journal of African History*, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1972, pp. 249-60.

15. D. Forde, *Efik Traders*, pp. 137-38; E. U. Aye, *Old Calabar through the Centuries*, Calabar, 1967, pp. 72-73.

within the homes of members were, in time, admitted to the lower grades of *Ekpe*. In any case, since the grades were attained by the payment of fees, the higher grades were controlled by the rich free nobility.

*Ekpe* exercised wide political, social and economic functions in Calabar society. It made laws, and even the missionaries and British consul enlisted its support to enact laws, such as the law against human sacrifice in 1850. In addition, *Ekpe* served as a police force to enforce the laws. It collected debts, stopped fights between individuals or groups, disciplined slaves, and generally kept the peace. *Ekpe* disposed of a range of sanctions as wide as its functions. It could place an offending individual or community on interdiction, boycott or ostracism. *Ekpe* could impose a fine, detain or arrest an offender, and on occasions, even execute a criminal.

*Ekpe*, then, was one institution that brought together all leaders and freemen of wealth and influence; that is, all those in the state with a common interest in peace and prosperity. In this way it helped to prevent in Calabar the type of disruptive political struggles that occurred in the eastern delta states. The weakness of *Ekpe* was that it discriminated against the slaves and the poor. It thus created class differences tending to polarize rather than integrate. *Ekpe* ensured that, unlike in the delta states, the slaves were not integrated into the social and political system. This element of discrimination led to the nearest thing to a slave revolt in Calabar in the rise of the *bloodmen* organization of slaves and the poor.<sup>16</sup>

The Order of Bloodmen was formed by slaves in the plantations who took a blood covenant to defend themselves against the practice of sacrificing slaves at the funerals of kings and lineage heads. It was as a consequence of an incursion of the Bloodmen into Calabar that Consul Beecroft prevailed on *Ekpe* in 1850 to enact the law against the ritual sacrifice of slaves. From 1850, the Bloodmen made several mass entries into the city at the deaths of kings or lineage heads to see that none of their member was sacrificed. They were so effective that some kings, notably, Archibong I and Archibong II, enlisted their support against their political rivals.

The Bloodmen could organize the way they did because of the real disabilities they suffered as a distinct group. There were, however, limitations to the objectives and effectiveness of the Bloodmen in Calabar politics. Their power of combination presented *Ekpe* with something beyond control on the few occasions they came into Calabar in a body. In that sense, the mere threat of a mass slave combination, and its demonstration in practice, introduced a new element in the political situation that must have served as something of a check on the excesses of *Ekpe*. The objectives of the Bloodmen were however limited to the redress of particular grievances, such as ritual sacrifice. They came out only during emergencies, and do not seem to have developed a political programme of their own in opposition to *Ekpe*. The slaves did not even appear to have demanded emancipation or participation in the running of the political system. Accordingly, in spite of the alarm occasioned among the ruling classes by the combination of the lower classes and slaves in the Order of Bloodmen, the society itself did not carry out a radical programme, and did not destroy the authority of *Ekpe* or of the kings of Calabar.

16. E.J. Alagoa, "Nineteenth century revolutions in the Eastern Delta States and Calabar", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. V, No. 4, pp. 566-69.

The political authority of *Ekpe* and the kings of Calabar was taken over in the last decades of the 19th century by the British, following the declaration of a protectorate in 1885. Calabar became a colonial headquarters for the protectorate government over most of southern Nigeria. The traditional authorities were in no position to oppose these developments by armed resistance. Like Bonny, Elem Kalabari and Opobo, the rulers of Calabar rather tried to maintain a subtle resistance of British penetration into the hinterland markets.<sup>17</sup> Even this opposition was of no avail, and in the closing decades of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the British moved up the Cross River conquered the peoples of the hinterland.

### The Igbo Hinterland

European visitors did not establish direct contact with the Igbo hinterland until the Lander voyage down the Niger in 1830. In the following decades a number of exploring voyages made their way up the Niger and established relations with Aboh, Onitsha, Asaba, and other riverain Igbo communities. Missionaries such as Ajayi Crowther and other Sierra Leoneans accompanied the explorers, and from the 1850s pious efforts were made at Onitsha and Asaba to set up missionary and trading enterprises.<sup>18</sup> British commercial enterprise on the Niger was strengthened when the various companies operating there were combined into the Royal Niger Company and granted a royal charter in 1886. By this act, the British government armed the commercial interests with powers of government and forcible interference in local affairs. The company established an administrative headquarters at Asaba, and a place of commerce close to Onitsha, and began to make treaties with various local rulers among the riverine Igbo.

Except for the communities on the Niger, therefore, Igboland did not come under the direct influence of the foreign agents of change for most of the 19th century. The bulk of Igboland experienced the effects of the external forces indirectly through contacts with the coastal trading states. Still, changes such as the abolition of the overseas slave trade probably made little difference to the veterans of that trade, since the coastal states continued to require slaves for domestic purposes. Certain communities in Igboland also continued to purchase slaves throughout the 19th century for domestic uses. But the new trade in palm-oil added a new dimension to economic activities, with the coastal states penetrating deeper into the hinterland, and the Europeans coming up the Niger; and towards the end of the century, up the Cross and Imo Rivers also.

Political development among the Igbo was thus affected by relations with the coastal states and the repercussions of the economic developments on the coast. But Igboland was also in contact with the Benin empire on the west, and with the Igala kingdom and other Niger-Benue states on the north. However, the main currents of development were generated by internal forces. Thus, religious sanctions characteristic of Igbo political integration were most important in shaping relationships

17. K.K. Nair, *Politics and Society in S.E. Nigeria: 1841-1906: A Study of power, diplomacy and commerce in Old Calabar*, London, 1972.

18. K.O. Dike, *Origins of the Niger Mission, 1841-1891*, Ibadan, 1962. E. Isichei, "Historical change in an Ibo policy: Asaba to 1885", *Journal of African History*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1969, pp. 421-38.



between peoples in Igboland in the 19th century. For the basic ethnic unit of the village group for example, it has been pointed out that the cult of the Earth spirit was even more important in political integration than the ancestor cult.<sup>19</sup> And the earliest large-scale integrating system of which we have a record among the Igbo was based on the spiritual powers of the Eze Nri. The Nri priests could move a wide area of Igboland without harassment because of the spiritual powers it was believed God had conferred on the Eze Nri. The first Eze Nri had, it was believed, brought forth the first yams, cocoyams, bananas, plantains, and oil palms, and he, accordingly, possessed the right to make the *oguji* or yam medicine for the surrounding towns. He had ritual powers over agricultural production. The Eze Nri alone could rid a community of an abomination or *nso* incurred through a breach of taboo; the Nri priests could also crown the *eze* of other towns, and tie on the *ngwulu* ankle cords when a man anywhere took the *ozo* title, the most prized in Igboland.<sup>20</sup> The peoples of Umudioka specialized in cutting *ichi* marks on the faces of title-holders.

Most of the Igbo west of the Niger, previously under the influence of the Eze Nri and paying tribute, apparently, came under the political influence of Benin before the beginning of the 19th century.<sup>21</sup> The Eze Nri's influence among the eastern Igbo was also undermined by the intrusive slave raiding and more violent activities of the Aro throughout the 19th century.

The organization of the Awka may be classified as a form intermediate between that of the Nri and of the Aro. According to some accounts, it was Nri who confirmed Awka in the work of blacksmithing through the award of an *ofo*, the ancestral Awka doing his first service for Nri by drying the earth with his bellows, and making *otonisi* ritual spears for Nri.<sup>22</sup> Another source states that Ushi or Agbala, the oracle of Awka, was "an off-spring of the Arochuku Long Juju".<sup>23</sup> Like the Nri and some Aro, the Awka travelled the country as priests, diviners, and doctors; and like the Aro they also carried on economic activities as smiths and carvers and traders in ivory, beads and other luxuries, but the Awka were peculiar in continuing to be agriculturists as well.

The Aro excelled in the manipulation of an oracle for the purposes of advancing the economic interests of a group. The most significant innovation was their use of mercenaries to enforce their will and to collect slaves for sale. The neighbouring Abam, Ohaffia, and Edda hired themselves out to the Aro as mercenaries. By these means the Aro built up a network of markets, trade routes, and agent communities round the greater portion of Igboland.<sup>24</sup>

There was a grid of trade routes connecting markets over the whole of central Igboland on a regional pattern. Thus the village-group of Nike served as the clearing

19. W.R.G. Horton, "God, man, and the land in a northern Ibo village-group", *Africa*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, 1956, p. 25.

20. M.D.W. Jeffreys, "Umundri traditions of origin", *African Studies*, Vol XV, 1956, pp. 122-26.

21. M.A. Onwuejogwu, *A Brief survey of an Anambra civilization in the Igbo culture area about A.D. 850-1937*, Onitsha, 1972.

22. Jeffreys, "Umundri traditions . . ." p. 126.

23. J.O. Nzekwu, "Awka: town of smiths", *Nigeria*, No. 61, 1959, p. 139.

24. U.I. Ukwu, "The development of trade and markets in Iboland", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1967, pp. 647-62.



house of the trade network of northern-eastern Igboland.<sup>25</sup> Nike served also as the agents of the Aro in the area, and were supplied with Edda mercenaries to aid them against hostile neighbours. Nike also collected slaves by direct trade with the neighbouring Agbaja, with their exhausted, over-populated land. The Nike kept many of the slaves in their own villages as a labour force, for ritual purposes, to serve as prophets and diviners; but also in *ohu* or slave villages to defend their borders. The majority were sold to the Aro down the Awka-Bende route or the Nkalagu-Cross River route. Nike also received horses from Hausa and Fulani traders from the north, and dane guns from the Anambra by the Idah-Ogrugru route, Nike received yams from the Ezza, Izi, and other groups in the Cross River area from Nike in turn supplied with goods from the other routes and markets.

The Aro-controlled twin markets of Bende and Uzuakoli south-central Igboland illustrate the convergence of traders from various parts of south-eastern Nigeria during the close of the 19th century. According to observers at the turn of the century, "Aro traders were always paramount", but traders also came from "Abaka Elugwu, Elugwu Ngwo, Agbaja Ngbogho, nnewi, Okaiugu, Obowo, Ibeku (Umuahia), Ukwu, Ndi Ikpara, Ohafia, Ozuitem, . . . Ibiobio and Onitsha".<sup>26</sup> From the north-west came Onitsha workers in ivory, and Awka men skilled in smithing, carving and the making of stools and tools. Bonny traders from the delta came with "huge loads of European goods", while the Aro brought similar supplies from the Cross River estuary, but especially iron bars for the use of the smiths. They also brought slaves from other trade areas such as Nkwerre, Ndizuogu, Uburu, and Nike. From Uburu came pigs, and locally woven black cloth. The traders from the Imo River valley also brought the famous Akwete cloth; and the Onitsha brought 'native tobacco'.

A system of agency and middlemanship also operated in the Bende/Uzuakoli markets. The Umuahia served as middlemen for traders from the Annang (Ibibio) and Ngwa areas, and the Uzuakoli for the Awka, Okigwi and Onitsha.<sup>27</sup> This market complex was thus a meeting place for craftsmen, traders, and primary producers. The Abiriba brassworkers, for example, by operating at Uzuakoli, got their wares distributed northwards as far as Ogrugru, south to Bonny, and west to Onitsha.<sup>28</sup>

Extensive as the Aro dominated grid of regional markets was over Igboland, there were systems which operated independently of it on the peripheries. Thus, the Oru or riverine Igbo areas along the Niger south of Onitsha, such as Osomari, were largely outside the Aro system. So was the north-western region from Aguleri to Ogrugru. To the south, the areas immediately adjoining the eastern Niger delta were also oriented to the delta states. Such markets have been listed as: Azumini, Ohambelle, Akwete, Ndoni, Eleme, Asa, Urantta, Usemodu, Elele, Omoku, Oguta, Obigbo, and Owerinta.<sup>29</sup>

25. W.R.G. Horton, "The *ohu* system of slavery in a northern Ibo village-group", *Africa*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, 1954, pp. 311-36.

26. A.J. Fox, *Uzuakoli: Short history*, London, 1964, pp. 16, 94.

27. Fox, *Uzuakoli*, p. 23.

28. F.I. Ekejiuba, "Preliminary notes on brasswork of Eastern Nigeria", *African Notes*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1967, pp. 11-15.

29. Ukwu, "Trade and markets", pp. 656, 659.

It has been considered evidence of the pervading influence of the Aro over Igboland that the British decided to attack the Aro oracle in 1902 as the first and necessary step to the conquest of the hinterland. The outcome of the expedition was, however, conclusive proof that there was no political control of the Aro over other Igbo groups. The columns of British troops marched through the hinterland and converged at Arochuku without any stiff opposition.<sup>30</sup> The colonial authorities had become frustrated at their inability to go beyond the coastal states by the end of the 19th century, and gradually built up an image of a formidable Aro power keeping them out of the Igbo country. In the event, Igboland was found to be politically segmented and the influence of the Aro merely on a spiritual and moral level, and used for economic purposes rather than political.

The whirlwind occupation of the country in the Aro expedition meant that the overwhelming military might of the conquerors was made known to all in good time, and nothing comparable to the Ekumeku resistance of the Asaba hinterland took place east of the Niger. It is instructive too, that all studies of Igbo conversion to Christianity in the first decades of the 20th century describe it as 'dramatic' and as a 'mass movement'.<sup>31</sup> While the lesson of the impossibility of resistance taught by the Aro and other smaller punitive expeditions cannot be overlooked, greater emphasis has been laid of Igbo recognition of the advantages to be gained from conversion. The mission school has been identified as the major attraction, after the Igbo realised the advantages of education in the new colonial situation.

This thesis of mass conversion seems to rely solely on the evidence of missionary records; although social anthropologists have also taken up the related thesis that the Igbo have been uniquely receptive to change.<sup>32</sup> The current studies have not given enough weight to the elements of stability in Igbo society. There is little evidence to support a view that the Igbo have discarded their religious and social institutions in preference for new ones to a much greater extent than other Nigerian groups. The 19th century saw various Nigerian groups subjected to increasing external pressures to which they adjusted in ways that were not radically different.

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30. J.C. Anene, "The Southern Nigeria Protectorate and the Aros, 1900-1902", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1956.

31. J.C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in transition, 1885-1906*, Cambridge, 1966, F.K. Ekechi, "Colonialism and Christianity".

32. S. Ottenberg, "Ibo receptivity to change" in W.R. Bascom & M.J. Herskovits, *Continuity and change in African cultures*, Chicago, 1959, pp. 130-43.

## THE WESTERN NIGER DELTA AND THE HINTERLAND' IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

OBARO IKIME

For the history of Nigeria the 19th century was, in many ways, a century of change. The British suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the century-long wars in the Yoruba country, the Islamic reformist movement led by Usman dan Fodio—these represent the more important factors which made for change in what is now Nigeria. Of these factors, it was the suppression of the overseas slave trade and the organization and problems of the new trade in palm oil and other forest products that had the greatest impact on the peoples and kingdoms of the western delta and its hinterland.

### The Western Delta and Overseas Trade 1800-1850

*Developments in the Itsekiri Kingdom:* It was suggested in an earlier chapter<sup>2</sup> that the slave trade in the western delta, especially the Itsekiri kingdom, was on the decline by the end of the 18th century. This statement now requires amplification. What would appear to have happened is that fewer slaves were being taken on at Ode-Itsekiri and Ughoton as European boats preferred to stop at Lagos for the purpose of collecting their human cargoes. This was because really large ships could not use the Forcados River because of its treacherous and shallow bars. The falling off in the number of ships visiting the Itsekiri kingdom must not, however, be interpreted to mean that the Itsekiri and Bini were necessarily giving up the trade in slaves. In the 18th century some Benin slaves would appear to have found their way to Lagos by the overland route.<sup>3</sup> Some such traffic, albeit in diminishing proportions, probably continued in the 19th century. The Itsekiri country is connected by a network of creeks to the Lagos lagoon, and Itsekiri slaves could thus easily be sold via Lagos. A recent historian of the Aboh kingdom has claimed that Aboh was, during this period, sending slaves through the Itsekiri kingdom to Lagos and Ouidah for sale.<sup>4</sup> We have

1. This chapter title is adopted in the interest of brevity. The area covered includes the Benin as well as the Aboh kingdoms which are not conventionally part of the western delta.

2. See chapter 8.

3. A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans 1484-1897*, London, 1969, p. 258.

4. K.O. Ogedengbe, "The Aboh Kingdom of the Lower Niger c. 1650-1900", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971, p. 303.

no means of assessing the volume of this trade via Lagos. What seems clear is that the very fact that fewer European vessels visited the Itsekiri kingdom meant an overall decline in Benin and Itsekiri trade as the 19th century opened. Captain John Adams who visited the area about this time definitely spoke of a decline in trade.<sup>5</sup> A decade later Captain Owen wrote that the Itsekiri country "possessed very little commerce".<sup>6</sup>

The prohibition by Britain of the overseas slave trade worsened the situation for the Itsekiri as the British naval squadron began to harry slavers in this as in other parts of the Niger Delta. We have no detailed evidence on the fortunes of the slave trade in this suppression era. It is known, however, that to the former disadvantages of the Forcados River area was now added the danger of being caught by the British navy in an area where, as Professor Ryder has pointed out "the turn-round was notoriously slow".<sup>7</sup> However, as elsewhere, slavers did dare the naval squadron. In 1825 Captain Fawckner met some Portuguese slave ships in the Benin River<sup>8</sup> and British traders seeking to tap the trade in palm oil in the 1830s found the presence of slave traders a nuisance.<sup>9</sup> Yet British admiralty records of slave ships seized and taken to Freetown in the 1830s indicate quite clearly that few ships took on slaves in the Benin River. The last recorded encounter between the squadron and slavers occurred in 1837 when a Portuguese slave ship, the *Veloz*, was seized.<sup>10</sup> It thus seems fair to conclude that unlike the situation in ports like Lagos and Bonny where the trade in slaves seems to have boomed up to about mid-century, in the Benin River area, the trade declined rapidly. And because of the decline in trade, the British, the leading European power in the area, paid little attention to the Itsekiri, not to speak of the Urhobo, Isoko and Ukwuani hinterland, in the first half of the 19th century.

The decline in trade produced a number of important internal developments. The Olu (as the Itsekiri call their ruler) who reigned from 1809-1848 has left behind a reputation for violence and autocracy in Itsekiri history.<sup>11</sup> While his 'violent and autocratic ways' may well have been partly faults of character, there is every indication that they were also products of the deteriorating economic conditions of his time. There is, for example, a report of a war with the Oba of Benin as the Olu tried to prevent European ships going to Ughoton, the port of Benin.<sup>12</sup> At home Akengbuwa fell out with a number of his leading advisers. The best known case is that of the *Uwangué* Uwankun who, in anger and for his safety, left the capital to found Jakpa on the northern banks of the Benin River. Uwankun, being a descendant of an 18th

5. Adams, *Remarks on the country from Lake Palms to the River Congo*, London, 1823, pp. 15-16.

6. Captain W.F.W. Owen, *Narrative of a Voyage to explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar*, Vol. II, London, 1835, p. 357.

7. Ryder, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

8. *Ibid.*

9. F.O. 84/1031, Campbell to F.O. 4 April 1859 (Public Record Office, London, hereinafter given as P.R.O.).

10. P.C. Lloyd, "The Itsekiri in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of African History*, IV (2), 1963, p. 214 and 39-41.

11. For details of the events of Akengbuwa's reign see Obaro Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, London, 1969, pp. 35, and 39-41.

12. Ryder, p. 230.

century Ologbetsere, the northern banks of the Benin River has become associated with the Ologbetsere 'house'. Ryder, taking after Egharevba, has suggested that Uwankun and his heirs, in order to strengthen their positions against the Olu, sought investiture from the Oba of Benin and paid tribute to him.<sup>13</sup> While Itsekiri traditions are silent on this point, the Jakpa group may well have sought some support from Benin against Akengbuwa's harshness.

It was not purely an accident that Uwankun and others who left the Itsekiri capital decided to move to the Benin River. Since the closing decades of the 18th century, the trade of the Itsekiri kingdom had been gradually shifting from the Forcados to the Benin River. Anchoring off the Benin River not only posed fewer problems of health and navigation, it also reduced the distance that had to be covered to the Forcados River. The movement of trade to the Benin River dealt a heavy blow to the Itsekiri monarchy. While individuals could move to meet the trade, the Olu, compelled by tradition to remain at the capital, could no longer do as much trade himself as when the Forcados River, on the banks of which the capital is sited, was the highway of commerce. Nor, given the differences between him and his leading advisers, could he effectively control the trade of the Benin River in terms of raising revenue from customs dues. As political power needed to be bolstered by economic strength, the consequence was a weakening of the monarchy which tended to make Akengbuwa more autocratic in a bid to maintain a semblance of authority. Yet greater autocracy produced increased migration from the capital and a worsening of the position of the monarchy. By the time Akengbuwa died in 1848, the situation depicted above had led to a virtual collapse of the Itsekiri monarchy.<sup>14</sup>

The death of Olu Akengbuwa produced a civil commotion in the kingdom. Even before the Olu's death, the royal house itself had become divided. Emaye, one of the Olu's wives, had been wife to a previous Olu, Erejuwa I. For Erejuwa Emaye bore two daughters, Uwala and Iye, and for Akengbuwa two sons, Omateye and Ejo. Akengbuwa's other possible heirs died before him, leaving Emaye and Ejo as his most likely successors. This situation produced the usual jealousies and enmities within the royal household and Iye, easily the most dynamic of Emaye's children, decided to found Batere on the southern bank of the Benin River as a refuge for her sister and brothers should civil war break out on Akengbuwa's death.<sup>15</sup> Needless to say, the choice of Batere had to do with commercial prospects in the Benin River.

The suspected war within the royal family did not materialize because Omateye and Ejo followed their father to the grave with a rapidity which Egharevba has attributed to a curse by the Oba of Benin.<sup>16</sup> In the resultant confusion, the slaves of Akengbuwa and the dead princes seized power in the capital. The idea apparently was to prevent any other relation of Akengbuwa being installed as Olu. That the slaves succeeded in their aim was a measure of their strength at the time. Only Iye and Ebrimoni, the latter a slave, emerged from disturbance with a measure of authority over the capital.

13. Ryder, pp. 130-31.

14. For a fuller discussion of migrations to the Benin River, see Obaro Ikime, *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta*, London, 1968, pp. 10-13.

15. Ibid.

16. Jacob Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, Ibadan, 1960, p. 47.



But neither of them could become Olu since the Itsekiri did not allow queens to rule over them nor did Itsekiri law allow a slave, however wealthy, to occupy the supreme office. Of the other possible claimants none, it would appear, possessed enough wealth to command a political following.<sup>17</sup> Itsekiriland thus passed into an interregnum which was to last till 1936. The problems and consequences of the interregnum will be taken up later.

*Benin and the Hinterland:* Of the Urhobo, Isoko and Ukwuani we know very little in detail during the first half of the 19th century. Obviously the trade with their coastal and riverain neighbours continued. As the producers of the palm oil marketed by the Itsekiri, the expansion of the trade in palm oil attendant on the suppression of the overseas slave trade would have led to increased production. Increased production may have resulted in competition for the palm belts which in turn may have produced inter-group warfare. But though there is clear evidence of inter-group wars, the causes of such wars are not always clearly remembered by the elders of today. While the Urhobo dealt with the Itsekiri, the Ukwuani and Isoko dealt with the Aboh kingdom, about which more will be said later.

For the Benin kingdom, the first half of the 19th century can hardly be described as a period of prosperity. Reference has already been made to hostile relations between Benin and the Itsekiri monarchy. Basic to this hostility was the question of trade. In every way the Itsekiri were better placed to tap the trade of the Benin River than was Benin itself. With the suppression of the slave trade, Ughoton, the port of Benin, fell on evil days, for European traders, now preferring to anchor off the Benin River, did not see the need to set up a factory at Ughoton.<sup>18</sup> This meant that Benin trade suffered.

The suppression of the slave trade was not the main reason for Benin's economic decline, for as Ryder has shown, Benin's economy was dependent not so much on the slave trade as on a 'heterogenous commerce' with several European nations and other Nigerian groups. Some of the items of this trade were slaves, ivory, palm oil, skins and 'cloth of native manufacture'. Duties paid on all of these items constituted one source of revenue for the Benin monarch. In the days of the slave trade, slaves and other products may well have found their way to Lagos through the overland route, thereby providing an additional source of revenue to that derived from the Ughoton trade. This overland route became less profitable in the 19th century because of the civil wars in the Yoruba country. The cloth which Benin sold came from the Yoruba (notably Ijebu) country as well as from Nupe. Again the Yoruba wars interfered with this trade with Ijebu while the jihad adversely affected trade with Nupe. The movement of Itsekiri trade to the Benin River also had an adverse effect on Benin trade, not only because it caused the eclipse of Ughoton, but also because it increased distances from Benin to the highway of commerce. Thus a number of adverse economic circumstances combined to undermine the economy of Benin in the first half of the 19th century. Economic decline was bound to be accompanied by political

17. Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 8. See also Obaro Ikime, 'The Changing Status of Chiefs Among the Itsekiri' in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (eds.), *West African Chiefs*, Ife, 1970, p. 293.

18. See above p. 3.

problems, not only in terms of relations between metropolitan Benin and the outlying parts of the empire, but also within the metropolis itself. The attempt to solve these problems created complications which European visitors were to exaggerate and use as the excuse for intervention in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>19</sup>

*Aboh and the Trade of the Niger Valley:* Aboh entered the 19th century a rich and powerful trading state. She had by the 1820s built up a virtual monopoly of the trade of the Niger valley because of the strength of her war canoes with which she was not only able to hold Ijo pirates in check, but also protect her long-distance trade. It is not always realized how far flung were Aboh's commercial links. She had trading relations with Onitsha, Asaba, the Igala kingdom, the Ukwuani and the Isoko, not to speak of the neighbouring delta states. From these areas she obtained her slaves and later her palm oil as well as articles of local trade. She had a special relationship with Brass from where she obtained her arms and ammunition as well as other European manufactures and to whose traders she sold foodstuffs and export commodities. A similar alliance was struck with the Igala kingdom, Aboh's great source of slaves. There can be no questioning Aboh's predominant position in the trade of the Niger valley.<sup>20</sup> As K.O. Dike has said, Aboh's naval strength was such that "the entire trade of the Niger valley was held up at will by her war canoes armed with brass and iron cannons".<sup>21</sup> The same strength was used to overawe the Ukwuani and Isoko hinterland and so to ensure a profitable flow of trade. And, from all accounts, Obi Ossai, Aboh's ruler during most of the first half of the 19th century, was a capable and determined ruler, easily "one of the most powerful and influential rulers on the banks of the Niger river".<sup>22</sup>

Aboh's economic and political stability assured by her predominance in trade and the ability of her ruler began to be assailed, perhaps imperceptibly at first, by the developments attendant on the British suppression of the overseas slave trade. Like Bonny, Aboh engaged in both the slave and palm oil trade, making a success of both. Accounts of Aboh's slave trading activities in this period are not too clear. Slaves were being sent to Aboh for sale from Bonny; supplies continued to come from the Ukwuani and Isoko hinterland as well as from Igala, and European accounts claim that even after the 1842 anti-slave trade treaty, Aboh could still easily fill sixty large canoes with slaves.<sup>23</sup> At the same time Aboh's palm oil trade was booming. Dr K. Ogedengbe has pointed out that the respect in which King Boy of Brass held Obi Ossai, derived from the latter's success in the palm oil trade: "King Obie too much palm oil, King Boy too little".<sup>24</sup>

However, Aboh was not unaffected by the activities of the naval squadron. True she was not bombarded on account of her involvement in the slave trade. It has already

19. This discussion of Benin's commercial and political problems is based on Ryder, *op. cit.*, chapter 6, section 3, pp. 227-38.

20. For a more detailed discussion see K. O. Ogedengbe, *op. cit.*, pp. 249ff and E.O. Okolugbo, "Ukwuani Religion and Christianity", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1972, chapter 4.

21. K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 26-27.

22. Ogedengbe, p. 249ff.

23. Ogedengbe, p. 302ff.

24. Ogedengbe, p. 249ff.

been pointed out that she was selling her slaves as far afield as Lagos and Whydah via the Itsekiri country. Nevertheless the activities of the naval squadron elsewhere affected Aboh's volume of trade and Ogedengbe has claimed that by 1841 the slave trade was on the decline.<sup>25</sup> The decline in the slave trade and the consequent need to increase the trade in palm oil would appear to have determined Obi Ossai's attitude to European activities in his kingdom as from the 1830s.

Aboh made her first contact with Europeans in 1830 when the Lander brothers strayed into Aboh's territorial waters in the course of their famous journey. Confronted with fifty large and well-armed canoes, probably on routine patrol, the Landers were seized near Asaba and taken to Aboh where they were held captive until they were ransomed by King Boy of Brass. The journey of the Lander brothers was but one symptom of the new interest generated in the Niger Delta area by the drive against the slave trade. This journey demonstrated that it was possible to reach the sea from the Niger via the delta. Thereafter, European, notably British, commercial adventurers sought to open up trading relations up the Niger from their seaboard base. In 1832 and again in 1834 Macgregor Laird, a British merchant who did a great deal to promote trade on the Niger, reached Aboh and established preliminary contacts. In 1841 the famous Niger Expedition also stopped at Aboh and on August 28 succeeded in getting Obi Ossai to sign an anti-slave trade treaty.<sup>26</sup>

During these first contacts with the Europeans, Obi Ossai was able to negotiate from a position of considerable strength. There could be no doubting the fact that he saw himself as an independent, responsible monarch. The leaders of the 1841 expedition must have been impressed by Ossai's awareness of his position. When they asked him whether he could enter into a treaty with them on behalf of his people, he retorted, "Are there two kings in England? There is only one here".<sup>27</sup> In the negotiations which preceded the actual signing of the anti-slave trade treaty, Obi Ossai hastened to point out to the British party that he did not sell his own people into slavery; only those from 'far countries' were so sold. He contested the argument that the slave trade produced wars, maintaining that slaves were obtained as a consequence of wars fought for other reasons. Aware that the activities of the naval squadron were bound to result in the gradual stoppage of the slave trade, he was prepared to sign the treaty on condition that the British ensured that many ships visited his kingdom to load palm oil and on condition that he and his people were well supplied with arms and ammunition to protect themselves against all who might take issues with Aboh for agreeing to stop the slave trade.<sup>28</sup> He did not add that the arms would also be useful in forcing the neighbourhood to produce more oil!

It is quite clear from all the evidence that Obi Ossai was anxious to promote the trade of his kingdom. He signed the 1841 treaty because he believed that it was possible for the trade in palm produce and other commodities to replace profitably that in slaves. But if this was to be so, then it was vital that Aboh should trade direct

25. Ogedengbe, p. 302.

26. Ogedengbe, p. 249ff and Okolugbo, chapter 4.

27. Okolugbo, p. 179.

28. Okolugbo, pp. 178-80.

with the Europeans and no longer through Brass. Hence Obi Ossai sought to court the friendship of the European traders to achieve the desired end. In 1832 he was angry with Macgregor Laird for not doing trade with Aboh and threatened to block the Niger against traffic unless Europeans "bought and sold with him".<sup>29</sup> In 1841 he evinced an interest in christianity and allowed the catechist Simon Jonas to preach the new faith among his people, though the latter's departure with the expedition put a temporary stop to this initial Christian missionary venture. But this was mainly because Ossai linked the new faith with British trade. He himself struck tenaciously to the religion of his fathers.<sup>30</sup> Obi Ossai thus realized that the times were changing and that he had to change with them. One way to do this was to make himself not one of the middleman traders of this area, but the middleman trader of the Niger valley. His flirtations with the Europeans were calculated to achieve this end. What he did not foresee was the consequence for Aboh of the kind of European trade that was to develop in the years ahead.

### **The Emergence of Consular Authority and New Trends in Anglo-African Relations in the Western Delta, 1850-84**

In 1849 Britain appointed her first consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra in the person of John Beecroft, himself a trader fully acquainted with the conditions of the delta. This appointment was clear evidence that British trade in the delta had grown sufficiently important to justify the expenditure involved in a consular establishment. It was also evidence of the fact that British trade and property in the delta needed to be protected. The need for protection arose from the problems of the new trade in palm produce and other commodities. In order to tap this trade more effectively Europeans began to build factories on land where they left agents who collected palm produce ready for shipment abroad. In the Itsekiri kingdom the firms of Horsfall, Harrison and Hemmingway had been established by the 1840s followed later by Douglas Stewart, Miller Brothers and James Pinnock who attempted to revive the trade of the Forcados River.<sup>31</sup> In Aboh, Macgregor Laird established a factory in 1857, and the United African Company and the Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Equatoriale in 1880.<sup>32</sup> The establishment of factories meant that European agents were now staying for prolonged periods among the peoples of the delta. This raised the issue of how to control Afro-European relations. The rulers of the delta were anxious to continue to wield authority as before, while the European supercargoes did their utmost to disregard the authority of these rulers. It was a situation in which conflict became endemic.

The actual occasions for conflict usually had to do with disputes arising from trade. There were various basic issues which tended to result in conflict. There was, for example, the trust system whereby the European traders gave goods in trust to the delta traders in return for an agreed quantity of oil. The delta traders then in turn

29. Ogedengbe, p. 249ff.

30. Before signing the anti-slave trade treaty, the missionaries insisted on offering a prayer to God. Obi Ossai joined them. But half way through he felt frightened by the fervour of the prayer and sent for his charms to protect him. See Okolugbo, p. 181.

31. Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, pp. 4-5.

32. Ogedengbe, p. 329ff.

gave goods in trust to the oil producers to ensure the increased production demanded by the overseas trade. The conflicts which arose from this system often had to do with differences over the amount of outstanding debt. In the Itsekiri kingdom such differences led to conflict in 1851 when the people of Bobi attacked and looted Horsfall's factory; in 1862 when one Ikebuwa attacked the factory of a Mr Henry and again in 1864. In all of these instances the European traders complained to their consul, arguing that the delta traders had been guilty of unprovoked aggression. This charge was not always proven. In the 1862 incident, for example, consul Freeman reported that Mr Henry as "so much to blame as to have deprived himself of any right to claim compensation".<sup>33</sup> Yet in all the cases, the consul inflicted punishment on the Itsekiri. In 1851 Bobi was bombarded and burnt down. Ikebuwa was made to pay a fine of twenty puncheons of oil and a collective fine of thirty five puncheons was imposed on the Itsekiri 'chiefs' for failure to prevent the "outrage".<sup>34</sup> The evidence, as contained in the British consular records themselves, hardly justifies the punishments meted out. It was thus clear that in the Itsekiri-British relations of the period, ideals of British justice were jettisoned in favour of the promotion of British commerce almost at any cost. In such circumstances British relations with the Niger Delta peoples were bound to be uneasy as indeed they were.

Then there was the question of fixing mutually acceptable prices for palm produce. The white traders had their eyes on the European market and sought to obtain prices that would give them reasonable (and quite often maximum) profit. The delta traders unable to check on the European market prices were often suspicious of the prices offered by the white traders. The only weapon which these delta traders had to force up prices was that of refusing to trade. In 1868, the Itsekiri led by the Governor of the Benin River, Idiare, stopped trade. In 1879 Governor Tsanomi<sup>35</sup> was also forced to impose an embargo on trade with Europeans. The British consul stepped in on both occasions and used the threat of the gun boat to force the Itsekiri to reopen trade. Indeed Tsanomi lost his office as a consequence of his effort to protect the interests of his fellow Itsekiri. In 1886 the great Nana, then Governor, also ordered the stoppage of trade. But he too had to yield to consular pressure backed as it was by the threat of force. The consuls paid no heed to the fact that while prices for palm produce were low, prices for European goods remained unduly high, thereby resulting in an unfavourable trade balance for the Itsekiri.<sup>36</sup> Here was further evidence of how consular authority began to undermine the power and therefore economic progress of the delta traders in the years immediately preceding the establishment of formal British rule.

33. P.R.O., F.O. 84/1201, Freeman to F.O., No. 9, 10 April 1863.

34. For a detailed account of these incidents, see Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 14-24.

35. This is a shortened form of the full name, Oritsetsaninomi. The consular records give the name as Chanomi.

36. The episodes summarized here are discussed in detail in my *Merchant Prince* . . . pp. 24-25, 57-59. On the issue of high prices for European goods, it is pertinent to note, for example, that in 1887, the year following that on which Nana stopped trade with the Europeans, salt was selling at ten to sixteen shillings per ton in Liverpool but was being sold at about £30 a ton in West Africa. See *The Liverpool Review*, 29 October 1887.



The situation in Aboh must have been similar though the records are less clear and specific. The successors of Obi Ossai were as anxious as he had been to do trade with the Europeans. The establishment of a factory by Macgregor Laird must, therefore, have been welcome. But Macgregor Laird also established another factory at Onitsha. This defeated the very purpose which Obi Ossai had sought to achieve by establishing friendly relations with the British, namely, to make Aboh the main trading centre of the entire Niger valley. At the same time as the British felt free to establish where they choose, they sought to capture all the trade of Aboh to prevent Aboh going trade with other traders. Yet the factory was not always regularly replenished, a situation which meant that tradewas often slack. This was the situation which led to uneasy relations at Aboh. Obi Aje, who succeeded Ossai, fell out with Cole, Laird's agent, and put his krooboys in chains. When Cole boasted about his race, Aje reminded him that "white men had died here before". Aje's brother, Okeyea, organized the plunder of Laird's factory to the tune of £1,200 worth of goods as a token of Aboh's discontent with the prevailing conditions.<sup>37</sup> On the whole Aje's relations with the European traders were clearly turbulent. When the *Dayspring* expedition called at Aboh in 1857, the British found Aje an extremely difficult customer and described him as "an insolent and rapacious ruffian".<sup>38</sup> This judgment was obviously one-sided, based on an improper assessment of the situation in which the Obi acted. It was part of that one-sided judgment that led to an attempted bombardment of Aboh in 1862. Commander Sholto Douglas who was sent to carry out the bombardment did not, in the face of the armed parties which Aje called out to the beach, feel strong enough to engage in hostilities. Armed confrontation was thus postponed for the time.<sup>39</sup>

Although the British tended to call out their gunboats and mete out fiery justice whenever there was a dispute between the delta traders and the European supercargoes, even they realized that it was far better to establish mutual confidence and trade in peace. They sought to achieve this through trade treaties with the delta rulers. Thus after the burning of Bobi, a treaty regulating trade with the Itsekiri was signed.<sup>40</sup> Similarly a treaty was signed with the Aboh in 1863 after the hostilities of the previous year.<sup>41</sup> However, these treaties failed to provide a stable basis for future relations. For while they invariably provided safeguards for European traders (and sometimes missionaries) operating in the respective areas, they failed to provide safeguards for the delta traders nor did they always recognize the sovereignty of the delta rulers.<sup>42</sup> Thus none of these treaties subjected the white traders to the control of the delta rulers. Disputes involving such traders and delta peoples were to be referred to the British consul or to a court of equity (composed of white and delta traders) for settlement. This arrangement was, for the delta states, a denial of an important ingredient of sovereignty. Hence the signing of treaties did not prevent hostilities. In

37. Based on Ogedengbe, chapter 7.

38. Okologbo, p. 187.

39. Ogedengbe, pp. 362-63.

40. National Archives Ibadan, Cal. Prof. 5/7 Vol. 1. The text of this treaty can be found as an appendix in Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, pp. 195-97.

41. Ogedengbe, pp. 362ff.

42. See notes 40 & 41 above.

the Itsekiri kingdom the 1851 treaty did not prevent the incidents of 1862, 1864, 1879 and 1886. In Aboh the treaty of 1863 failed to prevent the attack on Goldie's factory in 1882. Aboh saw Goldie's activities as directed towards pushing out the French company which was established there and so gaining a virtual monopoly of Aboh trade. The attack on the factory was thus a demonstration of their opposition. This time, however, they did not get away with it. A number of gunboats converged on Aboh and bombarded it, killing hundreds of the citizens. Thereafter the Royal Niger Company, as it became known from 1886, intensified its activities backed by gunboats, dictating its own prices and cutting off Aboh from her traditional markets.<sup>43</sup>

The result for Aboh was economic decline which was the prelude to the total loss of sovereignty.

*Internal Developments and Inter-group relations:* The second half of the 19th century also saw important internal developments in the various kingdoms and among the various peoples with which this chapter is concerned. Some of these were directly connected with the developments already discussed. Others were independent of, or only remotely connected with them.

In the Aboh kingdom the death of Obi Ossai was followed by a period of political instability resulting from a prolonged contest between Aje and Olise for the succession. At the very time when the balance of power between the British and the delta states was being tilted against the latter, Aboh did not possess a strong central authority for some years. Ogedengbe has suggested that towns formerly tributary to Aboh took the opportunity to withhold tribute and the Ukwuani may well have asserted their independence during this same period.

As was pointed out earlier, Obi Ossai had struck a profitable trading alliance with King Boy of Brass.<sup>44</sup> Ossai's preoccupation with securing European trade weakened this alliance. In fact, he placed an embargo on trade with Brass some time before his death in 1844. Trade was not resumed till 1851. By this time King Boy had died (1846) and Aboh-Brass relations were never the same again. In 1851 Aboh went to war with the Nupe in a struggle over trade, while under Obi Ojugbali I (c. 1870-80) the Aboh had to fight against the Anam Igbo who did their utmost to bar the former from reaching their Igala markets. These wars had a dislocating effect on trade.<sup>45</sup> Thus other factors were weakening Aboh's internal fabric at the same time as she had to contend against increased consular pressure.

By mid-century the Itsekiri kingdom, as should have become obvious, had been split into three main groups. There was the royal family still in Ode-itsekiri led by Oritsemone, Yonwuren and later Ogbe; the Emaye group based in Jakpa and led by Tsanomi, Numa and then Dogho,<sup>46</sup> and the Ologbotsere group which boasted such

43. Ogedengbe, pp. 376ff.

44. For a detailed treatment of Aboh-Brass relations see E.J. Alagoa, *The Small Brave City State*, Wisconsin, 1964.

45. Based on Ogedengbe chapter 7.

46. This is a shortened form of the full name, Omadogbogbone, given in the colonial records as Dore.

names as Idibofun, Idiare, Awala, Olomu and Nana with Batere as base.<sup>47</sup> The commercial and political rivalry among these groups constituted a major feature of Itsekiri history in the second half of the 19th century.

The trust system which has been described above encouraged rivalry among leading Itsekiri traders as they sought to appear credit worthy before the European traders. The other factor which led to rivalry was the race to secure customers and connexions in the Urhobo hinterland to ensure continued supply of oil. Such rivalry sometimes led to armed conflict between leading Itsekiri traders. We cannot go into the details of such conflict here but it is necessary to record that Olomu fought the royal princes led by Oritsemone over the trade of the Agbarho area; that the same Olomu fought even against his own kinsman Idiare over some Urhobo market in 1867. Nana, Olomu's son, made many enemies for himself because of his success in securing the trade of the greater part of the Urhobo hinterlands.<sup>48</sup> Indeed it was these enemies led by Dogho who conspired with the British against Nana in 1894 and so brought Itsekiriland under British colonial control. Thus deep could enmity arising from rivalry over trade grow.

The internal political structure of the Itsekiri kingdom also saw important adjustments during this period. There was no Olu. Therefore the council of state made up of the *ojoye* could not function, since the latter were advisers to the Olu. In the circumstances effective power passed into the hands of successful traders. As was pointed out earlier, leading traders had begun to migrate to the Benin River during Akengbuwa's reign. With them moved their kith and kin, slaves and such others who cared to join them. Each group organized itself into a kind of trading corporation which protected its interests against those of all others. Thus Ode-itsekiri ceased to be the seat of a respected central authority. Other centres of power and influence, notably Jakpa, Batere and later Ebrohimi, developed. The men who became Governors of the River and those who signed treaties on behalf of the Itsekiri kingdom were drawn from these interest and power groups.

For a people who had to deal with European traders in the manner already detailed above, it was necessary to possess some form of central authority. For the Itsekiri, the office of Governor of the (Benin) River provided the answer. This office antedated the interregnum. The Governor was traditionally the Olu's collector of customs and chief trading agent. Although the Governor was thus the Olu's servant as distinct from the *ojoye* who were his advisers, the office was of great importance because the Olu's power depended so heavily on revenue accruing from trade. If the office was thus important in pre-interregnum times, it became even more important in the situation created by the interregnum. For the Itsekiri saw in the Governor a figure around whom they could rally in the difficult task of protecting their interests against European traders. The latter also saw in the Governor an authority who could be pressurized into obtaining redress for them in their conflicts with the Itsekiri. While these two conceptions of the duties of the Governor were often contradictory, they did not diminish the importance of the office. Having said that, however, it should also be stated that whoever was Governor could not, in the Itsekiriland of the mid-19th century, expect the loyalty of the entire kingdom. The loyalty of his immediate kith

47. Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 11 gives the genealogy of these leading families and the relationships are discussed in detail on pp. 10-14.

48. These conflicts and rivalries are discussed in detail in my *Merchant Prince*, pp. 32-34.

and kin he could assume; that of the others, who were invariably rival or potentially rival traders, he could do no more than court. Whether he got it or not would depend on how cordial relations between him and the other groups were at the given time.

Whatever the limitations on the power of the Governor, it was an office that was sought after by the leading traders because, among other considerations, the European traders sought to do trade with the Governor. It was in the logic of things, therefore, that the office should be rotated between the two major divisions of the kingdom—the royal house and the Ologbotsere group. Idiare who became Governor in 1851 was from the Ologbotsere group; his successor Tsanomi was from the royal house. Then Olomu from the former group became Governor. When Olomu died in 1883, the royal house expected to produce the next Governor; but by that time Nana, Olomu's heir and successor, had become so successful and powerful that he could easily have defied anyone appointed to the office. So he was appointed. But this broke with previous practice and even if the royal group was unable to prevent the appointment, this additional success of the Ologbotsere group exacerbated existing rivalries and further steeled the determination of the royal faction to seek ways of turning the scales against their rivals. They found their answer in an alliance with the British, but this was an alliance bought at the price of the independence of the Itsekiri people.<sup>49</sup>

Itsekiri trade with the Europeans with all the consequences already detailed depended on continued Itsekiri trade with the Urhobo to the hinterland. The demands of the overseas trade in oil led the Itsekiri to intensify their trade with the Urhobo. It was in this process that they began to give goods in trust to their Urhobo customers. The trust system between the Itsekiri and the Urhobo produced disputes as did that between the Europeans and the Itsekiri. Disputes usually arose from the failure of the Urhobo to produce the agreed quantities of oil on time. Such disputes at times resulted in Itsekiri raids against the offenders during which slaves were taken. Very few specific instances of such raids are now remembered but both Olomu and his son Nana are known to have fought the Urhobo of Abraka and Agbon clans. Sometimes, to avoid such raids, the Urhobo gave their own slaves or even relatives as pawns to the Itsekiri as a guarantee that outstanding debts would be paid. The British did not always distinguish between these pawns and slaves taken during raids. As a consequence of such raids and the system of pawning, it would appear that the number of Urhobo men and women in the Itsekiri kingdom increased fairly rapidly during the 19th century. This increase was partly the result of the fact that with the suppression of the overseas slave trade, all slaves were kept within the kingdom and their children also became slaves. Powerful Itsekiri traders like Idiare, Olomu and Nana must have possessed hundreds of slaves and pawns working for them. From this situation, more than that of the days of the Atlantic slave trade, springs the claim which the Itsekiri are wont to make that the Urhobo were their slaves, a claim which up to the fifties of this century caused considerable strain in Itsekiri-Urhobo relations. Yet the history of Itsekiri-Urhobo relations in the 19th century was not predominantly one of hostility. The Itsekiri were not only dependent on the Urhobo for their export trade, they were also dependent on the Urhobo for their agricultural products

49. The issues here briefly discussed are treated in detail in my "The Changing Status of Chiefs among the Itsekiri", *op. cit.*, pp. 289-309.

since they could do no farming in the mangrove swamps. Besides, in order to tap the Urhobo trade more effectively, leading Itsekiri traders began to build permanent trading camps in the Urhobo country. Olomu and Nana are known to have established such camps as the 'watersides' of the Agbon, Udu, Okpe, Uvbie and Abraka clans, while Numa and Dogho did a similar thing in the Agbarho area. In order to pave the way for fruitful commerce, these Itsekiri traders made friends with leading men from these clans as well as married from the leading families. The upshot was a closer and more intimate kind of relationship which had the effect of toning down hostilities arising from failure to keep trade agreements. It is easy, in view of later hostile relations, to overlook this aspect of Itsekiri-Urhobo connections. For the Itsekiri, the European commerce in their kingdom had produced far-reaching consequences by 1883. For their Urhobo neighbours, European commerce meant little more than that a greater quantity of European manufactured goods now reached them. The kind of social and political dislocation already noticeable in the Itsekiri kingdom was for the Urhobo a 20th century phenomenon.<sup>50</sup>

For Benin too the second half of the 19th century ushered in momentous developments. In the economic sphere, the adverse circumstances earlier noted continued. Not enough is yet known about Benin's involvement in the palm oil trade. If the Bini themselves produced oil in large quantities they would have had to market this through the Itsekiri in view of the virtual abandonment of Ughoton. So instead of collecting duties Benin would have had to pay duty to the Itsekiri. Ryder has suggested that Benin may have sought to offset some of the loss thus incurred by taxing the palm oil trade at the Urhobo producing source. Ryder admits, however, that there is no evidence to support this postulate and the present writer's investigations in the Urhobo country do not reveal any such efforts. In fact Benin's relations with the Urhobo had, by the second half of the 19th century, become extremely tenuous.<sup>51</sup> Urhoboland could thus not have been a significant source of revenue for Benin in terms of tribute or tax on palm produce at source. For some time Benin was able to do a brisk trade in arms and ammunition with various Yoruba groups through the Oke-Igbo route to Ondo, Ife and Ibadan. But this trade began to be undermined when the Lagos administration began to develop the Ondo road which by-passed Benin. By the 1870s Benin had lost most of this trade.

Economic decline affected political cohesion at home. There is still to emerge a definitive study of Benin-Lagos relations. It is not yet clear at what point Lagos ceased to pay tribute to Benin. If indeed Lagos was still paying tribute at mid-century, this soon stopped with the bombardment of Lagos by the British in 1851 followed by formal occupation ten years later. Benin influence and power had been felt in the eastern Yoruba kingdoms right into the 19th century. During the reign of Oba Osemwede (d. 1851) rebellions by Akure and some Ekiti towns had "called forth a decisive and effective response from Benin". When similar rebellions occurred in the 1870s Benin could only muster a "feeble reaction". When Ibadan attacked her vassal

50. this discussion of Itsekiri-Urhobo relations is based on the writers earlier work. See *Merchant Prince*, pp. 29-34 and *Niger Delta Rivalry* which treats in depth the subject of Itsekiri-Urhobo relations.

51. See Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, pp. 13-14.



states brought together in the Ekiti parapo during the sixteen years war, Benin could offer no help. At the end of that war British influence was gradually established over the Ekiti parapo kingdoms thereby reducing Benin influence in that direction. At about the same time Nupe and Ilorin launched various attacks on different parts of the Benin empire, which Benin could do little to contain. External aggression encouraged internal dissension and the Ishan country successfully rebelled against Benin authority driving Benin, in the words of Ryder, "into the original heardlands".<sup>52</sup>

In the metropolis itself the second half of the 19th century was an uneasy period. Oba Osemwede's death in 1851 was followed by succession disputes out of which Adolo emerged victorious. But the disputes created divisions within the body politic and the defeated rival fled to the Ishan country where he fomented trouble for the next thirty odd years. Oba Adolo's reign was thus an uneasy one. We do not know enough about the internal developments in Benin during this period. Ryder points out that visitors to Benin in the 1860s and later were impressed by the evidence of human sacrifice. While he doubts whether human sacrifice was actually on the increase, he suggests the possibility that it was being practised in new ways. The erection of crucifixion trees was probably one of such new ways. He also suggests that the rulers of the period, "faced with growing hostile pressure from without and distracted by civil war . . . resorted to an increasingly vigorous exercise of their ritual power".

By the time Oba Adolo died, the Benin heartlands themselves were being hard pressed. It is true that his successor, Idugbowa, who reigned with the name Ovonramwen, did not have to fight for the throne, but this is not to say that he did not have his enemies. His brother, Orokhorho, and a number of chiefs, including the *Eriko*, *Obaraye*, *Obazelu* and *Osia* were actively against him. To strengthen his position the Oba had all these chiefs executed. Again this did not produce civil war, but it led to fear and intrigue in court which did little to produce that stability and effective planning needed to meet the challenge of the times. It did not help matters that Ovonramwen came to the throne in the 1880s by which time Britain was fast coming round to embracing that aggressive imperialism which was to mark European activities as from the 1880s.<sup>53</sup>

Of the Ijo of the western delta, there is very little information, known to the present writer, about developments as from mid-century. Most of the trade of the area was controlled by the Itsekiri on whom the Ijo would appear to have preyed from time to time. But their location in the creeks enabled them to engage in some of the Lagos trade especially in the 1870s. By the 1880s the Niger Company and Messrs John Holt and Company established trading stations in the Ijo towns of Patani, Frukama and Ganagana were particularly well placed to tap the trade of the Urhobo clans of Ughienwwe, Udu and Ewu. The effects of such trade on Ijo-Urhobo and Ijo-Isoko relations are as yet not clear.<sup>54</sup>

52. This discussion on developments in Benin takes after Ryder, chapter 7, sections 1, 2 & 3, pp. 239-60.

53. Ibid.

54. See Obaro Ikime, "The Western Ijo, 1900-1950: A Preliminary Historical Survey" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, IV 1, December 1967, pp. 66-70.

It will be noticed that nothing has so far been said about missionary activity in the area covered by this chapter. This is because christian missionary activity did not make any impact on this area till the 20th century. The efforts of Simon Jones in Aboh were spasmodic and ineffectual. In the Itsekiri country Bishop Ajayi Crowther tried without success to open a missionary station in 1875. The effective evangelization of this area had therefore to wait till the 20th century.

### **European Imperialism and the Collapse of the Western Delta States**

Although the British were easily the leading European power in the western delta, they had to contend against other European powers. In the Benin River the Dutch and Germans appeared on the scene in the 1880s as serious competitors. Elsewhere on the Niger the French were becoming a serious threat to British commercial interests. The reasons for the new and aggressive European imperialism are well known and do not need to be recounted here. For Britain, the appearance of other powers as determined rivals meant that she had to do everything possible to secure her own interests. This is what explains Consul Hewett's treaty-making spree of 1884 which took him from the Cameroons to the Benin River.<sup>55</sup> These were the famous 'protection' treaties on which Britain based her legal claims to suzerainty over what, in 1893, was to become known as the Niger Coast Protectorate. Hewett signed such a treaty with the Itsekiri on 16 July 1884. Soon after, the Ijo of Burutu and surrounding areas were brought under this same treaty. A great deal has been written about these protection treaties, pointing out that the Africans who signed them did not always fully understand what they signed. This is mostly true. However, with regard to the Itsekiri treaty, it is relevant to point out that Nana, who was then Governor of the River, and the other Itsekiri trader-elders refused to accept those clauses of the treaty which provided for Christian activities within the kingdom and the right of European traders to trade wherever they pleased. The latter issue was one vital to all the middlemen: they were anxious to retain their role as middlemen, a role which could easily be destroyed once European traders began to move into the hinterland. These offending clauses were accordingly struck out before the treaty was signed.

The signing of treaties was followed in 1885 by the declaration of a British protectorate over the Oil Rivers. For the Itsekiri this declaration meant little in the period 1885-91, except that they were compelled in 1886 to resume trade with the Europeans by a threat of force. Otherwise they continued to order their lives and trade very much as before. This was because with only one consul responsible for the protectorate there was very little evidence of the British presence outside the sphere of trade.<sup>56</sup> However, there is no doubt that the declaration of the protectorate in 1885 was evidence that Britain was about to embark on a change of policy with regard to this as well as other parts of West Africa. Since the visit of Consul Burton to Benin in 1862, for example, no British official had taken any further interest in that kingdom. Now, however, Hewett began to be pressured by British traders to visit Benin and sign a treaty with the Oba. Permission to visit Benin was granted and in January 1885 Vice-Consul Blair

55. P.R.O., F.O. 84/1660, Hewett to F.O., 28 July, 1884.

56. See my *Merchant Prince* chapter 3.

attempted to go to Benin. Unfortunately Blair fell ill on his way to Benin and had to give up the projected visit.<sup>57</sup> The attempt, however, was a sign of changing times.

At the same time that consular jurisdiction was being formalized and strengthened, the Royal Niger Company was extending its activities into areas hitherto subject to Benin as well as the Forcados River area. In the Benin River European traders who had been free from the competition of the company protested vigorously about the extension of the company's activities into the area; so did the Itsekiri.

In Aboh the company forced a treaty in Obi Imegwu by which the latter allegedly ceded Aboh and his other territories to the company in return for an annual subsidy of £32. 3s. 2d. The treaty also conferred on the company the right to exclude 'foreigners' from the Obi's territories. Using this treaty as a weapon, the company proceeded to exclude Brass traders from the Aboh market, thereby building up a monopoly for itself. In other ways the company also undermined the power and position of the Obi. It entered into treaties with 'chiefs and headmen' of villages hitherto tributary to Aboh. The use of war canoes on the river was banned thereby making it impossible for the Obi to punish recalcitrant vassals. The Obi and his people smarted under these impositions but the memory of 1883 was still fresh and the company was infinitely better armed. For the Aboh the end had virtually come. In 1896 she entered at last into a treaty of 'protection' with the British and thus passed formally into the Niger Coast Protectorate.<sup>58</sup>

Protests about the Niger Company's mode of operation also came from various parts of the eastern delta. In response to these protests as well as in an effort to discover the best way of administering the Oil Rivers Protectorate, the British Foreign Office sent out Major Claude Macdonald to the Oil Rivers in 1889 as a special commissioner. The upshot of Macdonald's report was the inauguration of what became known as the Niger Coast Protectorate.

Macdonald himself was appointed Commissioner and Consul General with supporting staff to inaugurate what was obviously a new era. Macdonald took up his new assignment in 1891. One of the very first things he did was to tour the entire area and establish vice-consulates. In the western delta proper he established two such vice-consulates—one at Warri and another in the Benin River. Benin was regarded as belonging to the Benin River district. Vice-consuls were stationed at both vice-consulates. It is obvious that Britain took this step in order to prevent the French or Germans seizing control of the area. But Britain was not prepared to burden the British tax payer with the cost of administering the Niger Coast Protectorate. As soon as possible, therefore, the new protectorate had to pay its way. This was why Macdonald introduced duties on imports in 1891; this was why the promotion and expansion of British trade became the preoccupation of the new administration.

It was in the drive to promote and expand trade that the British administration came to blows with the Nigerians of the western delta and its hinterland. In this connection there were two noteworthy conflicts—that between the British and Nana which resulted in the Ebrohimi expedition of 1894 and that between the British and

57. Ryder, p. 267.

58. Ogedengbe, chapter 7.

the Oba of Benin which resulted in the Benin expedition of 1897. Both of these have studied in detail elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> Here only brief summaries are called for.

As from 1891, the British vice-consul in charge of the Benin River vice-consulate began to tour the Urhobo hinterland with the aim of 'opening up' the area to trade. It is clear that this development was inimical to the interests of the Itsekiri middlemen of whom Nana was the greatest. However, the mere touring of Urhoboland and the signing of 'protection' treaties with the Urhobo did not alter the commercial status quo. What began to alter his status quo was the opening up of another vice-consulate at Sapele in 1891-92. This meant a reduction of the trade of the Benin River. Apparently, however, Nana was able to absorb this shock by sending his agents to do trade at Sapele too. In the Urhobo hinterland the British discovered that Nana's agents were in firm control of the trade and that indeed his influence was extremely strong. At the coast he was sufficiently powerful and wealthy to dictate his own terms, to refuse to take trust from European firms and so generally to continue as a great middleman trader. This was the crime for which he suffered bombardment and exile. But this could not be openly stated by the British. So they accused him of hampering the commercial development of the district; of terrorizing the Urhobo and turning them against the British; of engaging in slave raids and even—the most blatantly false accusation of all—of engaging in human sacrifice. The British found determined allies in all of those Itsekiri traders, led by Dogho from the 'house' of Emaye, who found Nana's grip on the trade of the area extremely galling. In the months of August to September 1894 the British mounted a joint naval-military expedition against Nana in his stronghold of Ebrohimi. Ebrohimi was bombarded into submission. Nana was ultimately tried and exiled to Ghana, his goods were sold and the proceeds used for defraying the cost of the expedition and his trading organization was broken up. After this the British were able to settle down to penetrating the Urhobo hinterland and generally making themselves the sole power and influence in the area.<sup>60</sup>

The Benin expedition had also very much to do with the British desire to bring the trade of that kingdom under their effective control. With the Niger Company pressing from the Asaba end, the British in control of Yorubaland, the Nupe pressing from the Idah end, Oba Ovonranwen in the period 1888-96 had to do everything possible to make what he could from the trade of the Benin heartlands. He did this by tightening his hold on the trade in palm oil, palm kernel and ivory; by imposing heavy duties on Itsekiri traders and banning trade when these duties were not paid. The inauguration of the Macdonald administration in 1891 did not alter the Oba's attitude to trade in his domains; nor did the 'protection' treaty of 1892 which the Oba himself did not sign. British traders operating in the Itsekiri country as well as the Itsekiri traders themselves found the Oba's hold on trade infuriating and inimical to their interests. Hence they began to put pressure on the vice-consul to bring the Oba under control. By 1894 vice-consul Gallwey was already blaming the Oba for the unsatisfactory state of trade and suggesting that he would have to be removed by force.

59. See my *Merchant Prince*, Ryder, op. cit; P.A. Igbafe, *Benin Under British Administration 1897-1938*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1968.

60. For the British penetration of Urhoboland see my *Niger Delta Rivalry*, chapter 4, and for the penetration of Ukwuani see Okologbo, pp. 192-203.

In 1896 Acting Consul Phillips decided to visit Benin with a view to discussing the situation with the Oba. Messages were sent to the Oba who replied to the effect that as he was celebrating the annual *Igue* festival he could welcome no visitors at the time. Itsekiri chiefs like Dogho who were familiar with the customs of Benin advised Phillips to postpone the visit. Phillips foolhardily decided he would go on to Benin despite the Oba's reply and the advice of well-meaning Itsekiri chiefs. Phillip's decision was unfortunate. For one thing it was only two years since the British overthrew Nana. In the circumstances it was easy for Benin to construe the intentions of the visit as hostile. Secondly, the decision to proceed after the Oba's reply would merely have underlined such fears and suspicions as the announcement of the proposed visit engendered. This was the background to the 'massacre' of the British party on its way to Benin in 1896. The British answer was a massive punitive expedition in 1897 which saw the sack of Benin city, the capture of the Oba and his ultimate deportation to Old Calabar. Thereafter the British established themselves effectively in Benin and proceeded to organize the subjugation of the outlying areas.

For all the peoples discussed in this chapter, then, the 19th century was a century of notable changes. For the Itsekiri and Aboh these changes were ushered in largely but certainly not wholly as a consequence of the suppression of the overseas slave trade and the switch to the trade in palm oil. Quite a few of the changes were essentially economic; but, as always, economic change produced political repercussions, the most significant of which was the radical alteration of Afro-European relations in the area under survey, an alteration which was climaxed by the imposition of British colonial rule.

It is important to emphasize, in this connection, that with regard to Benin, the factors which produced change had to do far more with internal developments—by which I mean developments in Benin and the neighbouring Nigerian groups—than with the suppression of the overseas slave trade *per se*. Finally, it must be obvious that the impact of economic and political change varied as between the various peoples concerned in this chapter. Even so, however, intense change among one group did tend to have repercussions elsewhere. Thus the changes which took place among the Itsekiri affected Itsekiri-Urhobo relations, as they did Bini-Itsekiri relations. By the end of the century all of the peoples concerned had been inexorably drawn into the vortex of the new imperialism which was to make their history in the 20th century so very different from the history of the centuries before.



## YORUBALAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

J.F.A. AJAYI AND S.A. AKINTOYE

For the Yoruba people, the 19th century was a period of intense and dramatic changes. The political troubles at Old Oyo culminating in the collapse of the Oyo empire, the evacuation of the capital, and the mass movement of Oyo people southwards, set in motion a chain of events which came to leave its impact on every part of Yorubaland. The Fulani took advantage of the troubles to establish an emirate at Ilorin. From there, as well as from Nupe, they subjected the northern parts of Yorubaland to constant pressure throughout the century. Benin traditionally wielded much influence in eastern Yorubaland, and even though it was itself weakening under pressure from the Nupe, Urhobo, Europeans and others, it was loath to abandon the bases from which it wielded this influence. Dahomey also took advantage of the troubles to shake itself free of Oyo control, to make constant incursions into and to establish its power on parts of Egbadò and upper Ogun. Finally, the Europeans began to penetrate from the coast and, largely through freed slaves, established a few bases in the interior from which they exerted political, economic, religious and social pressure on different parts of Yorubaland.

To appreciate the changes that these internal dislocations and external pressures brought about in the country, it should be stressed that the political and demographic map of Yorubaland in 1800 was very different from the pattern which we know today, and which has not changed much since the Europeans assumed control at the end of the 19th century. In 1800, not only was the total population much smaller, the pattern of distribution was very different. Apart from the Awori in and around Lagos, the riverain Ijebu and Ilaje, few Yoruba took an interest in the coastal trade, and the coastal areas were very thinly populated. On the other hand, the northern areas, particularly the north western area, some 60 miles radius to south-west and southeast of Old Oyo, were the most thickly populated parts of Yorubaland. There, the largest, most cosmopolitan cities and busiest trade routes were to be found.<sup>1</sup> Today, these areas are largely empty, being largely a government Forest Reserve, with many ruins of ancient cities known only to forest guards and local hunters. In 1800 some of the

1. See a description of this area in H. Clapperton, *Journal of the Second Expedition into interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccattoo*, London, 1829; Smith, R. *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, Methuen 1969.

most important Yoruba towns of today, like Ibadan and Abeokuta, did not exist. Osogbo was an Ijesa town; Ikire, Gbongan and others were Ife; all these are now Oyo towns. Oyo communities are to be found in many parts of Ife, Ekiti and other places where they did not exist in 1800. The Egba lived north of where they now live, up to the Ibadan area and beyond.

By 1800, though the Yoruba were one people they were not always conscious of themselves as such. They spoke mutually intelligible dialects of the same language and shared common cultural, religious and political institutions. It is not very clear from the traditions whether they were ever one kingdom that broke up into several, or several kingdoms, founded at various periods among different Yoruba-speaking peoples. The various kingdoms shared the belief that their several founders originated from Ife, and origin at Ife became the usual way to validate a claim to being an independent monarch entitled to wear beaded crown with fringes and to wield the sovereign power of life and death over subjects. The kingdom was the unit of political power. But cultural identity went beyond the kingdom to include the whole Yoruba people and, in each region of Yorubaland, to include a sub-ethnic group speaking the same dialect. Of these sub-ethnic groups, the principal ones were the Oyo, Egba, Egbado, Ijebu, Ijesa, Ekiti, Ondo, Akoko, and Owo. By 1800, loyalty to these sub-ethnic groups was such that a Yoruba slave abroad in Sierra Leone or Brazil usually identified himself as Oyo, Egba or Ijebu, with the result that European observers initially took these to be separate ethnic or linguistic groups.<sup>2</sup>

Within these sub-ethnic groups, there was competition among the kingdoms, sometimes over land and usually rivalry for precedence or dominance, sometimes to the point skirmishes or war. Among a few sub-ethnic groups, like Oyo and Ife, the dominance of one ruler was widely acknowledged; among others, like the Ijesa and Ijebu, one ruler appears in the past to have established such dominance even though challenges to such dominance were becoming evident; among others like the Ekiti, the autonomy of several kingdoms was recognized.

The most successful of the Yoruba kingdoms in building up its power was the Oyo kingdom, with its capital in the more open country of north-western Yorubaland, probably less woody than even now because of the much heavier population and more intensive cultivation that it sustained then. Taking advantage of its location, it built up a cavalry force which gave it dominance not only throughout the Oyo area, but also over the neighbouring parts of Borgu and Nupe, over Egbaland and Egbado, as well as over Dahomey and Porto Novo. It controlled for all its length the trade route from Porto Novo and Whydah, through upper Ogun to Old Oyo. The other most important route from Benin through Owo and Akure to the Niger also passed through Oyo. Oyo traded through Borgu with the Western Sudan, and through Nupe with Hausaland and Borno.

The dependence of Old Oyo on cavalry force limited its activities in the forested areas of eastern Yorubaland. Here, the Ijesa kingdom located to its immediate south-east was the most powerful of the Yoruba forest kingdoms and it fought back many

2. See, e.g. S.W. Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana*, edited by P.E.H. Hair and D. Dalby, Sierra Leone, 1963; first ed. London, 1854.

Oyo attacks.<sup>3</sup> Possibly, Oyo invasions stimulated the evolution of a common political leadership under the Owa of Ilesa among the many independent Ijesa towns. It was said that by the beginning of the 19th century, the Ijesa kingdom comprised some nine hundred towns and villages, including Osogbo and Igbajo. Indeed, so powerful was the kingdom early in that century, that she had even begun to pursue an expansionist policy in the Ekiti area to its east where Benin military, political commercial and cultural influence had been more in evidence.

In fact, in the period before the 18th century, the Benin army had frequently invaded the Owo kingdom and large areas in Ekiti and Akoko. In addition, colonies of Edo peoples settled in Owo, Akure, Ikare, Ise, Egosi and in other towns and villages along major trade routes linking Benin through eastern Yorubaland to the Niger. These Edo settlements ensured the retention of Benin cultural presence and commercial influence when her political influence declined during the 18th century. Again, in the early 19th century when her attempts to revive her political and military control were largely unsuccessful, the commercial and cultural contacts remained important. As a result by 1800 the political institutions, royal regalia, and court rituals and ceremonies in these areas bore varying imprints of Benin influence.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout Yorubaland at the beginning of the 19th century, Ife was treated with some reverence as the cradle of Yoruba culture and the original home of the founders of the Yoruba kingdoms. Oyo was respected more for its power and wealth. The activities of Ife and Oyo together helped to minimize war among the Yoruba kingdoms, and sustained the belief that the Yoruba obas (kings) were all members of one family, with set conventions for regulating relationship among them. This essential basis for political stability in Yorubaland was removed when Old Oyo collapsed.

### **The Collapse of Old Oyo<sup>5</sup>**

The collapse of Old Oyo came from within. As a result of deep-seated political disputes, the authority of the Alafin (king of Oyo) within the capital city had eroded to the point that he could no longer rule or command the allegiance and instinctive support of his chiefs. With the Alafin and his chiefs so divided among themselves, the authority of Oyo as capital city no longer carried weight in the rest of Oyo or the outlying parts of the empire. All this happened before external factors became involved. Attempts to contain these factors or to resolve the disputes proved futile.

3. S. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, Lagos, 1921; S. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893*, Longman, 1971, pp. 29-30.

4. S. Akintoye, "The North-eastern Yoruba and the Benin Kingdom," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, iv, 1969.

5. For the account that follows, see: I.A. Akinjogbin, "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth century—A Reassessment", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, III, (3), 1966; Akinjogbin, "Prelude—to the Yoruba Civil wars of the Nineteenth century", *Odu: University of Ife Journal of African Studies*, (2), 1965; J.F.A. Ajayi, and R. Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth century*, Cambridge, 1964; R.C.C. Law, "Chronology of the Yoruba Wars of the Early Nineteenth Century", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, v (2), 1970.

Challenges to the authority of the Alafin in the second half of the 18th century by leading civil and military chiefs were signs of this internal instability. At first, the revolt of Afonja, the Are-ona Kakanfo, head of the cavalry force, appeared to be just another one of such challenges. He set about building up Ilorin, where he was based, as an independent town. In his rebellion, he received the support of other leading chiefs at Oyo who had their own grievances against the Alafin. He also received the support of a few provincial rulers. As the initial efforts to suppress this rebellion failed, other chiefs followed his example. Afonja also had the support of a few Muslims, led by Alimi, a Fulani cleric who incited a revolt of the Hausa slaves on whom the care of horses and the strength of the cavalry force depended. With the aid of the few chiefs, Yoruba Muslims, the Fulani, and Hausa slaves, Afonja sustained his rebellion and proceeded to bring other parts of the kingdom under his control.

Within a short while, however, Afonja fell out with his Fulani allies. He refused to become a Muslim. He complained about the excesses of the freed slaves and he tried to discipline them, only to discover that he was no longer in command. Thus ensued the contest for the control of Ilorin. Afonja was defeated and killed (c. 1823-24). The Yoruba Muslims led by Solagberu<sup>6</sup> also failed in their bid to control the town. The Fulani emerged as the controllers of Ilorin and Ilorin became an outpost of the Sokoto Caliphate, a base for attempting the forcible incorporation of large parts of Yorubaland into the muslim empire and, when that failed, a powerful centre for the Islamisation of the Yoruba people. Meanwhile, the Egba had taken advantage of the troubles to establish their independence. Later, Dahomey also revolted and overthrew Oyo imperial control. The empire was breaking up. Fulani pressure on Oyo was such that the capital had to be evacuated and thousands of people fled from the centre of the Oyo empire to the southern parts of Oyo—the Osun and Ibarapa areas—as well as the territories of the Ijesa, Ekiti, Ife and Egba. Dislocations caused by the pressure of this mass of people, the ambition of uprooted peoples led by their more warlike chiefs to find new homes and new opportunities, provoked a series of wars in the central and southern areas of Yorubaland, with far-reaching consequences.

One of the most important of these wars was the Owu War, between the Ife and Owu kingdoms.<sup>6</sup> The quarrel between the two focused on the control of the market town of Apomu. A dispute in the market had led to a skirmish in which Owu took control of the market town. Ife, in seeking to recover control of Apomu, had the alliance of the Ijebu to the south. Masses of Oyo warriors, fleeing from the north and seeking adventure, joined the Ife and Ijebu allies. Together, they laid siege to Owu, starved it out and completely destroyed it. From Owu, the victorious allies turned on the Egba towns and villages, and systematically destroyed them too on the grounds that they had given succour to the beleaguered town. The victorious army, swollen with booty and slaves, encamped at a small Egba village called Ibadan. The Egba and Owu regrouped themselves at Abeokuta in the south-western corner of the former Egba territory. Some Oyo warriors settled at Ijaye, another former Egba town. Other Oyo refugees swelled the populations of Ogbomoso, Iseyin, and Iwo in the Oyo area;

6. Ajayi, & Smith, *ibid.*, A.L. Mabogunje, and J. Omer-Cooper, *Owu in Yoruba History*, Ibadan, 1971.

Osogbo in Ijesa area, and several Ife towns like Ikire, Apomu, Gbongan, Ipetumodu and Ile-Ife itself.

Among the Oyo refugees who were fleeing south and seeking new homes, loyalties to traditional rulers and the lineage tended to weaken although efforts were made to strengthen them. These efforts were very noticeable in cases where the refugees settled in existing towns and acknowledged the authority of the rulers of such towns. On arrival at the towns the refugees attached themselves to distinguished relations or townsmen who had preceded them there. In the absence of such personalities and if the refugees came in large numbers they were allowed to settle in groups on the bases of their former lineages and towns. Settlements of this type were often called by the name of their old towns (Ejigbo, Ogbomoso and Iwo exemplify this pattern in varying degrees). Later with the permission of their host towns, the refugees in many cases appointed rulers from among the members of the old royal lineage present among them. Such rulers became their representatives in political matters within the township.

In other places such as Ibadan and perhaps Modakeke where the military class predominated almost exclusively and people of different lineages were thrown together, people gathered around the daring chief irrespective of his lineage and traditional status. Even in these situations, the refugees would prefer to attach themselves to some distinguished persons from their lineages or towns—such was the potency of the lineage system. But the system was weakening. The new military chief or leader gathered his following, provided for them and increased his power and appeal by undertaking frequent and daring raids on neighbouring or distant towns and villages. Like his predecessors in the 19th century era, the new chief set up new compounds comprising members of his family and lineage, non-lineage members who constituted a large part of his following, and slaves. The core of the compound organization was still the lineage but membership was no longer strictly based on a common ancestry. This allowed for the accretion of a large number of non-lineage members who later became assimilated, thus modifying the concept of the lineage system. This pattern was to make a deep and widespread impact upon Yoruba social and political organization in the 19th century.

### **Troubles at Ife<sup>7</sup>**

Among the Ife, Ijebu, Oyo and other warriors who encamped at Ibadan, settling down to find a new city, the acknowledged leader was an Ife war chief, Okunade, the Maye, who had led the campaign against Owu. He was a brave warrior, but he proved an impetuous and rash ruler. Initially, he enjoyed such power and prestige in the new settlement that the Ife began to look on Ibadan as a new extension of their kingdom. This was a period when Ife appeared to be on the verge of a new ascendancy. The destruction of Owu, the alliance of the Ijebu, the control of the labour and other resources of large masses of Oyo refugees seeking protection and sustenance in Ife towns, villages and farms, seemed to hold great promises for the future. At first, the refugees lived mostly in Ife villages like Ipetumodu, Edunabon and Moro; but later, a

7. For the following account, see S.A. Akintoye, "Ife's Sad Century: The Nineteenth Century in the History of Ife", *Nigeria*, No. 104, 1970.



threat of Ilorin invasion from the direction of Ede sent several of them fleeing into Ile-Ife itself. In return for grants of land, the refugees worked for the Ife on their farms, and many chiefs thus raised extensive farms. Many of the refugees also served as soldiers in Ife armies and Ife was thus enabled to expand its frontiers especially towards the east and south.

Their greatest success was in Ondo to the south where the death of Arilekolasi, a very wealthy Ondo ruler, had sparked off a civil war. His numerous slaves and household, accusing the Ondo people of having poisoned the king, rebelled and withdrew from Ode-Ondo to settle on the royal farm at Okeigbo. Ife was soon drawn into the civil war which then ensued in the Ondo kingdom. The Ife moved troops, occupied Okeigbo, sacked Ode-Ondo and other towns to the south. The Osemawe (king of Ondo) and his leading chiefs remained in exile with his capital in ruins for over two decades, while the Ondo people kept up guerilla-type activities against the intruding Ife people and the rebellious slaves.

However, this promise of Ife ascendancy proved short-lived. The ill-tempered administration of Chief Okunade at Ibadan led to an open confrontation between the Ife and the Oyo citizens of Ibadan in a contest for the control of the town. Okunade and most other leading Ife warriors were expelled from Ibadan. He went to raise a large army, but his attempt to recapture Ibadan was defeated at the Gbanamu battle in which he lost his life, and the independence of Ibadan under the control of the Oyo elements was assured. Ibadan then invaded the Ife kingdom and overran several towns and villages up to the very walls of Ile-Ife.

This weakened Ife considerably. In the Ife kingdom, great antipathy developed between the Oyo refugees and their Ife hosts. While those refugees recruited into the army or royal household were sheltered, those employed on the farms were exposed to popular animosity and tended to be treated like slaves. The fear that the refugees could look up to Ibadan for support only worsened this animosity. So also was the well-founded belief that some unpopular Ife rulers were using the refugees in their army to maintain themselves in power. There was thus not only social unrest, but also bitter political conflicts. It was one of such rulers who advised several of the Oyo refugees to gather themselves together in self-defence at a new settlement on the outskirts of Ife, called Modakeke. The Ife tried to destroy the settlement, only to provoke an attack on Ile-Ife which was sacked in about 1850. It required the intervention of Ibadan in 1854 to settle the dispute and bring the Oni (ruler of Ife) home from exile. The result, however, was that both Ife and Modakeke became vassals of Ibadan. This involved accepting Ibadan resident officials, paying tribute and contributing human and material resources to Ibadan's war efforts whenever required to do so.

### Developments in Ijebu<sup>8</sup>

With the destruction of the Egba towns in the 1820s, the Ijebu-Remo towns became the home of professional slave traders. Slaves caught in the wars passed through Remo territory to Ikosi, an important port on the lagoon, onward to Lagos. The rise of the

8. For the following account see O.O. Ayantuga, *Ijebu and its Neighbours 1851-1914*, Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1965.

Egba after 1832 put an end to the lucrative activities by the Remo people. Thereafter, Remo towns became the targets of Egba attacks, rendering life in Remo area very much insecure. By the 1850s, such was the destruction and insecurity there that only a few towns such as Ipara, Iperu and Makun could be regarded as militarily and economically viable. Others such as Epe and Ofin were ghost towns. Makun was later to be destroyed by the Egba in 1864.

As a result, there was a mass movement of people from these towns to Ikorodu which traditionally was under the Akarigbo at Ofin. Gradually, Ikorodu replaced Ikosi as the lagoon port on the mainland. Finally the continuous insecurity led many of the Remo towns and villages including Ofin and Makun to come together in 1872 and form the new town called Sagamu. A constitution similar to that of the Egba at Abeokuta was adopted. The Akarigbo was recognized as the head of the town with the other traditional rulers as his subordinates. The Osugbo (another name among the Ijebu for Ogboni) retained its powers as the effective organ of government while the age-grade associations allowed for the participation of every section of the community in civic and political matters.

Many towns were also destroyed in the northern parts of the Ijebu kingdom, leading to the foundation of new towns. Ijebu-Igbo was settled by the former inhabitants of Oke-Agbo, Ojowo and three other villages, while Ago-Iwoye (as the name implies) was a resettlement of refugees from Iwoye town. Some Oyo refugees, for example people from Ighon, also found their way to Odogbolu. In all these new settlements, it appears that the refugees settled in groups according to their lineages or former towns, each under its own leader or chief or oba. These processes of resettlement of people and relocation of towns did not appear to have affected Ijebu-Ode perhaps because of the policy of its rulers to exclude strangers except those who were brought in as slaves.

### **The Rise of Ibadan<sup>9</sup>**

Meanwhile, momentous developments were taking place to the north and west of Ijebu country as the uprooted Oyo and Egba peoples tried to find a new basis of political order. On evacuating from Old Oyo, Atiba, one of the eligible princes who had spent some time as a hostage in Ilorin, decided to build a new capital much further south. He decided on the site of the present Oyo, then a little village called Ago, near his mother's home where he had grown up. He gathered people from surrounding areas to populate the town. He built a palace on the model of the one at Old Oyo and tried to recreate the court ceremonials and the hierarchy of chiefs, taking care to avoid factors that had weakened the position of the Alafin at Old Oyo. This appeal to tradition, however, failed to attract the warriors most of whom had settled at Ibadan and Ijaye which quickly emerged as militarily more powerful than the new capital. He conferred on Oluyole, the new leader of Ibadan, the title of Bashorun, with a charge to guard the disrupted kingdom against attacks from the north and east. On Kurumi, the leader of Ijaye, he conferred the title of Are-ona-Kakanfo, with a charge to guard the

9. B. Awo, "The rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851-1893". D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford 1964; Ajayi and Smith, *op. cit.*

kingdom against attacks from the west. Both nominally acknowledged his suzerainty, but each went his own way. Oyo was no longer one kingdom, but a collection of states over which Oyo, Ibadan and Ijaye contested for dominance.

In this contest, the appeal to tradition that Atiba made at the new Oyo could not be ignored. But as long as the situation in the country remained unsettled, an appeal to tradition did not provide the necessary guarantee of personal safety and security of possessions. The leaders who were able to provide security had become more important than the divine kings who were guardians of traditional laws and customs. Ijaye was the first to emerge as a major military power. It is said that the flower of the old Oyo army settled at Ijaye and Kurumi in a brutal rise to the top succeeded in imposing his personal rule and discipline over the whole town. At Ibadan, on the other hand, Oluyole's bid for personal ascendancy was cut short by his untimely death. Ibadan then emerged as a kind of republic where access to office and promotion within the chieftaincy hierarchies was based largely on qualities of leadership shown especially in war irrespective of ethnic status, or background. The possibility of a mere warboy rising to become an important chief attracted many talented people from all over Yorubaland to Ibadan to learn the art of warfare and seek a career. Ultimately, therefore, the Ibadan system proved superior to that of Ijaye. Ibadan grew rapidly as a major city, geared to war and further expansion.

While Ijaye expanded towards the upper Ogun and came in conflict with the Alafin's territorial claims, Ibadan faced the Ilorin for the control of the Ibolo (now called the Osun) district. Here, their major rival were the Fulani at Ilorin. Ibadan recorded its first major victory against them at the battle of Osogbo in about 1840. From there, the Ibadan pushed the Ilorin armies back northwards till beyond Ikirun just south of Offa. In town after town where the Ilorin were expelled, the Ibadan established firm political control. In due course, the neighbouring Ife towns of Apomu, Ikire and Gbongan were incorporated into the new Ibadan empire. By 1854, as we have seen the Ife kingdom as a whole was treated as a vassal.

### Abeokuta<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, Abeokuta was taking shape as a large city. The Egba constituted most of its citizens; but there was also a large community of Owu refugees including their royal lineage. Under the leadership of Sodeke, the hero who had led the Egba to Abeokuta, the town was gradually evolving a new political system. There were three important claimants to power within the town: the lineages of the traditional rulers, the traditional organs of government represented by the Ogboni (the old Egba State Council) and the *parakoyi* (the guild of traders), and the emergent war chiefs. Sodeke tried to impose his personal rule on the town and thus tried to contain the problem but it erupted after his death in 1845. Eventually, the town evolved a delicately balanced constitution in which the relative claims of all the competing groups were accommodated. The Alake (ruler of one of the three Egba kingdoms now crammed together in Abeokuta) gradually surfaced as the head of the town, but in the course of the century, lineages of other rulers appointed their own obas—the two other Egba

10. S.O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours*, 1842-1872, London, 1957.

dynasties, Osile and Agura, and the Olowu. The war chiefs were dominant in military matters while the Ogboni bridged the gap between the Alake, the war chiefs and others in the town in civil matters. The Parakoyi were paramount in economic matters.

The political problem did not weaken Abeokuta's military achievements. After their settlement at Abeokuta, its citizens began pushing southwards in quest of new farming lands and ultimately access to the coastal trade. Here they clashed with the Ijebu who had hitherto enjoyed little competition in the trade. The Ibadan also viewed the growth of Abeokuta as a potential threat and they tried to make common cause with the Ijebu to nip it in the bud. When the Egba defeated the allied forces at the battle of Owiwi in 1832, the survival of Abeokuta was ensured. The town then intensified its pressure southwestwards into the territories of the Egbado and Awori. Here their great rival was Dahomey, also seeking to expand into the same area. Dahomey, bent on the destruction of Abeokuta, became an implacable enemy of the Egba. The defeat of Dahomey outside the walls of Abeokuta in 1851 was to be followed by more Dahomey attempts on Abeokuta, and many more incursions first into Egbado and later into the upper Ogun area in the course of the century.

### **The British in Lagos<sup>11</sup>**

By 1851, British intervention in Yorubaland reached the point where they were able, in a show of naval power, to impose their nominee in a disputed succession in the Lagos kingdom on the south-west coast. They had long been traders on the coast, though their favourite trading areas were in the Niger Delta to the east and on the Gold Coast to the further west. In their campaign against the Atlantic slave trade, however, ships of the British squadron began to interfere off the Lagos harbour, especially from 1820 onwards. Some of the slaves from the Yoruba wars sold on the coast thus found their way to Sierra Leone. In the 1840s, missionaries began to follow a few of the returning freed slaves to Badagry, Abeokuta and other places prepared to welcome them. Missionaries supplied ammunition to their supporters in Badagry and they fought on the side of the Egba in the war against Dahomey in March 1851. It was partly to find a direct trade route from Abeokuta to the coast that missionaries joined traders in urging the British government to intervene in Lagos, drive out Kosoko and install Akintoye a pro-Egba claimant to the Lagos throne.

This intervention gave the British a major foothold from which to pursue their interests against the overseas slave trade and in favour of the trade in agricultural produce and the encouragement of missionaries. From Lagos, missionary activities spread beyond Abeokuta to Ibadan, Ijaye, Oyo, Ogbomoso and a few villages near these major towns. Within ten years, the trade and the best commercial land in Lagos had passed into the hands of the British traders and those of their proteges among the returned freed slaves. In 1861, the British government acknowledged this by dismissing the reigning king of Lagos and setting up a British administration in his place. The British administration in Lagos thus became one of the many political units jockeying for political and commercial advantages in the country.

11. J.F.A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891*, Longman, 1965; A.B. Aderibigbe, "The expansion of the Lagos Protectorate 1862-1902", Ph.D. Thesis, London 1958.



### The Struggle for Eastern Yorubaland<sup>12</sup>

The realignment of forces in western Yorubaland soon began to make its influence felt in eastern Yorubaland. Ilorin and Ibadan shifted the scene of their rivalry from the Osun district eastwards to Ilesa and beyond. Benin, as we have seen, had earlier controlled commercial, and some political influence in much of the area. Soon, the Nupe from the Niger joined in the struggle for the control of the area. The Ibadan proved the most successful of the empire builders.

In the first two decades of the century, Benin had made a final attempt to revive its political influence in Owo, Akoko, Ekiti and Ikare. Benin troops had some notable successes, but Benin was no longer able to sustain any military or political influence. Rather, it was the Nupe under Malam Dendo, the Fulani jihaddist, who occupied the extreme northeastern parts of Yorubaland, the Oworo, Bunu, Iyagba, Owe and Ijumu between 1830 and 1850. Later, their armies made incursions into Igbomina, Akoko, and northern Ekiti. They even went beyond into Afenmai in today's Bendel State. They established some provincial administration frequently disrupted by revolts. In most places, Nupe control was usually only of short duration.

Meanwhile, the Ilorin, thwarted in 1840 in their expansion directly southwards, had started to veer due eastwards into the Igbomina, Ekiti and Ijesa territories. In the more open countries of Igbomina and northern Ekiti, the Ilorin cavalry gained some successes. But whenever they ventured into the thickly forested hills of Ijesa and southern Ekiti, they met with failure. Ilorin campaigns in these areas soon attracted the attention of Ibadan. Not only did the campaigns show that Ilorin was not accepting defeat, they seemed also to represent the first stages of a manoeuvre to circumvent the Ibadan in the Osun area by penetrating through Ekiti, Ijesa and Ife ultimately to attack Ibadan itself from the east. Moreover, the rivalry between Ibadan and Ijaye for dominance in the Oyo country had developed to such proportions as to lead Ibadan into seeking new territories to conquer in order to collect tributes, acquire captives to cultivate crops for sale, to buy arms and ammunition, recruit fighting men to swell its forces and thereby strengthen itself generally.

The Ibadan forces first entered Ekiti about 1847. Ten years later, they had expelled the Ilorin. By 1860, Ibadan ruled a vast empire comprising most of Ekiti, most of Ijesa, almost all of Akoko and much of Igbomina, in addition to the vast Oshun territories and the Ife kingdom.

In that year, 1860, the Ibadan-Ijaye rivalry finally burst out in open hostility.<sup>13</sup> Because his upper Ogun claims clashed with the territorial ambitions of Ijaye, the Alafin had secretly supported Ibadan all along. The Egba, as might be expected, went into alliance with Ijaye. Ilorin did the same, although it was to take little or no direct part in the fighting. By then, the Ijebu had revised their attitude to developments in the country and had come to realize that Ibadan, rather than Abeokuta, was the power to fear. By 1852, friendship had developed between Ijebu and Abeokuta and both were soon to begin taking measures to prevent Ibadan from using their roads to buy arms and ammunition in the coastal ports. Consequently, when the war broke out

12. For following account see S. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics*, op. cit.

13. Ajayi & Smith, op. cit.



in 1860, Ijebu took the side of Ijaye and the Egba. In March 1862, Ijaye collapsed and was razed to the ground.

The fall of Ijaye, however, did not mark the end of the war. For three further years, the fighting was shifted to the Remo areas of the Ijebu kingdom. The Remo towns controlled the best and shortest routes between Ibadan and the port of Lagos and, during the Ijaye war, had refused to co-operate in cutting trade off with Ibadan. As soon as Ijaye fell, therefore, the allies moved into Remo and the Ibadan followed in order to relieve the Remo towns. A stalemate developed which was not resolved until 1865.

Ibadan emerged from these conflicts the most powerful state in Yorubaland. It could now resume its expansion towards the east. For, during Ibadan's pre-occupation in the Ijaye war, Ilesa, employing Ibadan war tactics, had re-asserted its independence and begun to carve out a new kingdom for itself. It had subjugated some Ekiti towns and sought to bring Igbajo back under its hegemony. Ibadan relieved the siege of Igbajo in 1866 but delayed its attack on Ilesa because of the intervention of Captain (later Sir) John Glover, the British Lieutenant-Governor in Lagos. From 1867, however, Ibadan resumed its conquest of Ilesa and completed it in 1870. By 1875 Ibadan was master of all the Ijesa, Ekiti, Akoko and most of Igbomina. It had also by then elaborated a system of provincial administration.<sup>14</sup> An Ajele on the spot saw to the daily government of each subordinate town, transmitting the tributes to Ibadan and ensuring the continued loyalty of the town to Ibadan. All the subordinate towns in Osun, Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti, Akoko and Igbomina, apart from paying regular tributes, also had to support the Ibadan with food, money and men whenever Ibadan was on campaign. A boundary was tacitly agreed to with the Nupe who continued to control the Bunu, Aworo, Owe, Iyagba and Ijumu territories. Beside the city of Ilorin itself, the Fulani controlled a number of towns in the northern Osun district as far south as Offa. The town of Ikirun developed into Ibadan's frontier post against Ilorin.

The Ibadan provincial administration early showed some serious weaknesses. On the whole, it was an oppressive system that gave little in turn for the burdens imposed on the subjects. Although some of the Ajeles were responsible and fine officers, most behaved irresponsibly, treated the subject peoples brutally, and corruptly enriched themselves. Their attendants and the messengers of the Ibadan chiefs were often worse. The tributes and services demanded by Ibadan were usually quite crushing. As a result, Ibadan became progressively unpopular in the provinces.

### **The Sixteen Years War<sup>15</sup>**

In 1877, feeling that the interior provinces of its empire were at last reasonably pacified and secure, Ibadan declared war on the Egba. Since the end of the Ijaye and Remo wars, Ibadan had always felt crippled by the embargo placed by the Egba and Ijebu on the importation of guns and gunpowder through their roads. Consequently, in the rainy seasons of 1877 the Ibadan forces marched out to attack the Egba farms and villages in what was designed as the first steps of a campaign to force open the

14. B. Awe, "The Ajele System: A study of Ibadan imperialism in the Nineteenth century" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, III (1), 1964.

15. Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*; Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics*, op. cit.

Egba and Ijebu roads to the coast, conquer and absorb the Egba and Ijebu territories into the Ibadan empire and thus complete the unification of practically the whole of Yorubaland under Ibadan's leadership.

Unfortunately for Ibadan, however, the campaign did not progress as expected, and a year later the subject peoples in Ekiti, Ijesa, Akoko and Igbomina seized the opportunity and revolted. After killing and expelling the Ibadan officials among them these peoples pulled together in a confederacy, the Ekitiparapo, to fight for their independence. In 1882, the Ife also revolted and threw in their lot with the Ekitiparapo. During the same year, Dahomey added immensely to Ibadan's headache by seizing advantage of Ibadan's preoccupation to begin a series of invasions of the upper Ogun area, which were to continue until the Dahomey kingdom itself was conquered by the French in 1894.<sup>16</sup>

An alliance developed between the Ekitiparapo and the other enemies of Ibadan — Ilorin, Egba and Ijebu. The Alafin had, since the destruction of Ijaye, also become an enemy of Ibadan. The Ibadan leaders had not only frequently defied him, they had also inherited Kurunmi's territorial ambitions on the upper Ogun. Consequently, the Alafin secretly sought the fall of Ibadan and, when the Ekitiparapo came into being, he gave surreptitious encouragement to it.

Ibadan was thus confronted by a combination of almost all the other Yoruba states. As a result although all of them put together could not really destroy Ibadan, Ibadan was compelled in the end to accept a settlement which involved a dissolution of most of its empire. By a treaty of 1886, Ibadan recognized the independence of the members of the Ekitiparapo.

The 1886 treaty, however, did not end all the wars. The Egba continued to be formally at war with Ibadan and continued to restrict trade through their roads with the Ibadan. The Ijebu who had, in 1883, withdrawn from the war and made peace with Ibadan, still so distrusted and feared Ibadan that they would not disband their forces. Moreover, the decision of the leading Ijebu traders and warriors to withdraw from the war in 1883 had led to sharp divisions among the Ijebu leadership, divisions which had threatened a civil war and had compelled the Awujale Fidipote, the advocate of all-out war, to flee to exile. Though this Awujale had died in 1885 and his opponents had installed their nominee on the throne, much bitterness existed between his supporters and those of the new Awujale and the threat of civil war was frequently in the air. Partly because of this situation and partly because of the traditional reluctance of the Ijebu to allow free traffic to foreigners through their country, Ibadan traders in the north and Lagos traders in the south continued to have their trading restricted by the Ijebu. In addition, the 1886 treaty did not settle the situation in the Ife kingdom. During the war, the Modakeke had allied with Ibadan and an Ibadan-Modakeke force had sacked Ile-Ife. This had resulted in the Ekitiparapo sending a force to aid the Ife in destroying Modakeke—and the Ibadan in sending a force to defend Modakeke. The treaty provided that the Modakeke should disband and move from Ife territory to Ibadan territory. However, the Modakeke refused to endanger

16. For the sufferings of the upper Ogun area in the nineteenth century, see S.O. Babayemi, 'Upper Ogun: An historical Sketch', *African Notes*, VI (2).

their freedom by moving nearer to Ibadan. The Ife therefore also refused to break up their forces and reoccupy their town.

Finally, the Ilorin-Ibadan conflict was not settled in 1886. The Ibadan would not concede that the Fulani of Ilorin had a right to rule any part of Yorubaland and, therefore, refused to withdraw the forces which they had sent to support Offa against Ilorin since the beginning of the war. So near Ilorin is Offa, however, that the Ilorin authorities could not feel safe in their town while Offa was controlled by Ibadan. Even after the Ibadan forces, annoyed at petty divisions among the Offa people, withdrew from the town in 1887 and allowed it to fall into the hands of Ilorin, the Ibadan and Ilorin continued to fight in the area for six further years—the Ibadan forces which had withdrawn from the Ekitiparapo war being stationed at Ikirun for this purpose. As a result, the Ekitiparapo kept its army intact to watch developments around Offa and Ikirun.

The Ilorin-Ibadan conflicts were to survive all these other complications. With the withdrawal of Ibadan and Ekitiparapo forces from Modakeke and Ife early in 1887, all fighting in the Ife kingdom stopped—even though the Modakeke would not move away as stipulated by the treaty and the Ife would not reoccupy their town until 1894. The deadlock in the Ijebu country was brought to an end in 1892 by a British military expedition from Lagos which conquered the Ijebu kingdom and forced its roads open. Soon after this, to avoid a similar fate, the Egba threw their roads open. Finally, in 1893 the Ilorin-Ibadan war was terminated with a settlement establishing their boundary as a line between Offa and Ikirun. The Ilorin and Ibadan armies then returned home and the Ekitiparapo forces were disbanded. The greatest and the longest of the 19th century wars had come to an end.

### **The Last Wars in North-Eastern Yorubaland**

Although the Akoko were members of the Ekitiparapo from its inception and although many Akoko youths served in the Ekitiparapo forces, the leading Akoko warriors were too pre-occupied with the Nupe<sup>17</sup> to contribute their own due share to the Ekitiparapo war effort. During the 1860s, the influence of the Nupe had gradually grown in Akoko although the Ibadan were still the overlords of the area. With the growing preoccupation of Ibadan in other places in the 1870s, the influence of the Nupe grew stronger still. In fact, there developed a strange sort of alliance between the Ibadan men on the spot and the Nupe against the difficult and rebellious Akoko towns. Following upon the formation of the Ekitiparapo against Ibadan in 1878, the leading Akoko towns formed a separate alliance of their own to expel the Nupe. The Nupe quickly suppressed the weaker towns in the alliance but failed completely to subdue Oka, its leading town. Moreover, the Nupe forces were compelled by internal troubles in the Nupe kingdom itself to abandon the campaign.

Meanwhile, the Nupe domination of Iyagba and the other Yoruba territories further north was fast approaching a crisis. By the early 1880s, excessive taxation had forced many of the Iyagba to abandon their towns and make for the more inaccessible

17. For an account of Nupe activities in north-eastern Yorubaland, see M. Mason, 'The Jihad in the South: An outline of the Nineteenth Century Nupe hegemony in North-eastern Yorubaland Afenmai', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, V (2), 1970.

hills. In answer, the Nupe substituted continual raiding for the more orderly collection of taxes, and thousands of people were captured and taken to Bida as slaves. This policy made Nupe political influence more unpopular than ever before and, thereby prepared the ground for a massive revolt of subject peoples. Also, from the last years of the 1880s, the influence of the Royal Niger Company grew on the Niger and its activities gradually undermined Nupe influence in the north-eastern Yoruba territories.

Finally, about 1895 the storm burst. The Ijumu, Akoko and Iyagba entered into an alliance and sent their united forces together at Ogidi to resist the forces whose headquarters were at Kabba. In spite of the superiority of the Nupe cavalry, the allies acquitted themselves very well until relief came in the form of a constabulary of the Royal Niger Company in 1897. The invading Nupe broke off the attack and fell back to defend their own capital city of Bida. The subsequent defeat of the Nupe by the company in that year terminated Nupe political influence in north-eastern Yorubaland.

In 1897 too, Ilorin came to a similar fate as the Nupe.<sup>18</sup> Ilorin had continued to show its dissatisfaction with the 1893 settlement. In particular, Ilorin sent some political officers to towns south of Offa as well as to parts of Igbomina and northern Ekiti. In this, it found itself checked by the officials of the British administration in Lagos who had been sent to the interior to ensure compliance with the 1893 settlement. Repeated attempts by Ilorin to expel the British garrison from around Ikirun failed. Finally in 1897, the northern Ekiti towns killed or expelled the Ilorin officials and collected a united army which they sent to meet a large Ilorin army that was advancing into Ekiti. The two armies met at a village called Erinmope, but before the fighting had been properly joined, a contingent from the British garrison near Ikirun arrived and, using its heavy guns, routed the Ilorin forces. Not long after that, Ilorin itself was conquered by forces of the Royal Niger Company.

### Ways and Means in the Wars<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the wars, traditional Yoruba weapons continued to be an important factor, in spite of the increasing employment of imported European fire-arms. Such traditional weapons included the broad sword which was usually of two types (the short type called *jomo* and the long type called *agedemgbe*), as well as bows and arrows. Though shields were not unknown they were never a usual part of the fighting gear. For personal protection against the weapons, each soldier employed a large variety of charms, some made by babalawo, others made by muslim charm makers. As a result, Babalawo and Muslim charm makers were always to be found accompanying every army. Unfortunately, no exhaustive study has been made of the place of charms in 19th century Yoruba warfare, but the evidence is conclusive that the Yoruba reposed much confidence in these charms and employed them not only for personal protection but also for offence both in attacking the persons and the morale of the enemy.

18. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics*, chap. 8.

19. Ajayi & Smith, *op. cit.*, Part I.



Cavalry, which before the 19th century had been the backbone of the Oyo army, was hardly ever employed by the Yoruba in the 19th century wars. Large numbers of horses were still to be found all over the country, but they seem to have been used only for conveying chiefs and for civil transportation. Ibadan continued to confer many of the old titles of cavalry commanders (carried on from Old Oyo tradition) but at no known major battle did the cavalry contribute significantly to Ibadan's war effort. Among the Fulani of Ilorin as well as among the Nupe, however, cavalry warfare continued to be important throughout the century. In their first encounters with Yoruba armies, both the Fulani and Nupe appear to have derived considerable advantage from the speed of their cavalry, but this advantage would seem to have gradually waned as is evidenced in the Ibadan-Ilorin encounters and the last battles of the Nupe against Yoruba alliance in the north-eastern parts of Yorubaland. It is not clear why the Yoruba, especially the Oyo, largely discarded the cavalry in the 19th century. It is known, however, that one of the earliest sanctions employed by the Fulani at Ilorin against the Oyo kingdom was to cut off its trade with the north from where it used to procure its horses.

Apparently, military leaders of Oyo origin reacted to this by eschewing reliance on cavalry—so that when the Ibadan captured hundreds of horses at the battle of Osogbo in 1840, they simply slaughtered most of them for meat. Moreover, as the main wars moved south into increasingly thick wooded and tsetse-ridden country, cavalry became an unwise investment.<sup>20</sup>

One of the leading changes which Yoruba warfare witnessed in the 19th century was the increasing use of fire-arms. By 1800, guns and gunpowder were not unknown to the Yoruba. They had probably also penetrated inland through the Dahomey country in the 18th century. But it was in the Owu and Egba wars early in the 19th century that firearms, introduced first by the Ijebu, began to come into regular use. By the 1870s, probably every fighting man carried a musket and a pouch of gun-powder, usually, in addition to the traditional weapons.

The type of guns most commonly used was the Dane, or trade, gun. This was a muzzle-loader, requiring some three to four minutes to reload. As a result, their increasing employment led to the development of that fighting tactic, so frequently described by eye-witnesses, of having the army divided into a number of sections discharging their guns and then streaming back to the rear to reload in succession. The usual formation for this mode of fighting was the massed formation in which the armies drawn up face to face pouring streams of fire against each other. However, even this formation permitted a large variety of manoeuvres of which the Ibadan developed into the greatest masters in the country.

Of other types of gun there was very little. Even in the last years of the wars, artillery was hardly used. However, not long after the beginning of the sixteen years war, the Ekitiparapo began to obtain certain advanced guns—the Sniders, the Martini Henri, the Mauser and the Winchester—all of which were breech-loading rifles. The Ekitiparapo raised a fairly sizeable rifle corps and introduced the tactics of trench warfare. All this greatly enhanced the superiority of the Ekitiparapo over the Ibadan in the years 1882-84 and, for a while, threatened the Ibadan army with destruction. Both the

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20. Ibid.



Ibadan and Ilorin also succeeded in obtaining some of these rifles in the end, but not for as long as, and not in numbers as large as, the Ekitiparapo did.

The growing importance of European fire-arms in Yoruba warfare did not only lead to tactical innovations, it also affected the political decisions that were being taken. Though some fire-arms were obtained from the Niger ports by the Ilorin, most of the guns used in the wars entered the country through ports on the Atlantic seaboard. In the first decades of the century, the most important of these ports were Porto Novo and Badagry. From the 1850s, both the Ibadan and their Ekiti, Ijesa and Akoko opponents imported considerable quantities of guns through Benin. But Lagos was destined to become the most important of the ports during the second half of the century. Now, to control the routes to these ports, or at least to ensure freedom of passage there for one's people, became one of the leading issues around which the diplomatic and armed contests of the century were fought.

The most important of these routes passed through the Egba and Ijebu territories to Porto Novo, Badagry and Lagos. Up to about 1850, both the Ibadan and Ijebu intrigued with the Egbado through whose country the routes from Abeokuta to Porto Novo and Badagry passed, and overtly attacked Abeokuta—partly to prevent the political rise of Abeokuta through the control of the routes and partly to establish some control over the routes themselves. By 1850, however, the Egba had not only proved that they could defend Abeokuta, they had gained control over most of the towns controlling the Egbado roads. Then in 1851 the British seized control of the Lagos kingdom. This was followed by the transfer to Lagos of the headquarters of many of the coastal firms and was, therefore, a boon to the stature of Lagos as a trading port. It also led to a diplomatic revolution in the interior of Lagos. The Egba desired to open the Ogun River, whose lower reaches passed through Ijebu country, to Lagos. Ibadan sought to exercise some influences over the routes which developed to Lagos through the Remo part of the Ijebu kingdom. These, in addition to the growing fear of the phenomenal expansion of Ibadan in the eastern interior, led to a rapprochement between the Egba and Ijebu against Ibadan in the 1850s.

From then on Ibadan was confronted by frequent attempts by the Egba and Ijebu to prevent guns and gun powder from reaching it from the coast. But even trade in non-military goods was employed as a weapon in the power contest between the Egba-Ijebu allies and Ibadan. In general, the ideal which the allies sought to establish was a sort of trade relay in which Ibadan sold the goods of the interior to them in their northern markets, they sold these to the Lagos traders in their southern markets, then bought imported goods in the same markets for sale to Ibadan in their northern markets. Ibadan always sought to overthrow this arrangement because it placed her at the mercy of her enemies. The British, who in 1861 finally established a colonial administration over Lagos, also denounced the attempts to restrict the movement of Lagos traders and charged that the Egba and Ijebu aspired to a monopoly over all trade. Naturally, an alliance developed between Ibadan and the British administration of Lagos under Captain John Glover.

In 1865, in an attempt to force the Remo roads open, the Lagos administration intervened in the Remo war, forcibly broke the Egba hold on the Remo town of Ikorodu and thereby brought the war to an end. But it soon became clear that this action did not produce the desired result and, consequently, the Lagos administration

began to look for alternative routes to the interior.<sup>21</sup> Between 1869 and 1872, the administration sent expeditions to explore a route through the eastern lagoon to the Ilaje creeks and from there inland through the Ikale, Ondo, Ife and Ijesa territories to the rest of the Yoruba hinterland. It was one of these expeditions that brought peace between the Ondo and Ife and made it possible for Ode-Ondo to be rebuilt (though it failed to get the Ife to give up Oke-Igbo) in 1872. Lagos traders took advantage of the new route. Nor only did this route bring the eastern Yoruba peoples at last into direct participation in the trade with Europeans it was to play an important role generally in their social and political history. It served as the channel through which Christian missionary activity, which had for some decades expanded to western Yorubaland, was to expand successfully to eastern Yorubaland. Later, it was to strengthen the Ekitiparapo in their revolt against Ibadan.

During the sixteen years war, attempts to control at least part of the traffic through the eastern road accounted for much of the diplomatic efforts of the belligerent parties. From the very beginning, the Ondo authorities made it clear that they would remain neutral in the war and allow both the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo to trade freely through their country. However, the common Ondo people tended to sympathize with the Ekitiparapo, while the Ife, reacting against their subordination to Ibadan, frequently attempted to prevent Ibadan traders from using the part of the road passing through their country. On the other hand, the Ondo and Ilaje were often annoyed by the business methods of the Ekiti and Ijesa men from Lagos who came to settle along the routes in the Ilaje country and who seemed to aspire to a lion's share of the trade. Moreover, the peoples along the route—the Ife, Ondo, Ikale, Ilaje and the coastal Ijebu—were themselves often locked in bitter strife. Consequently all parties trading through these routes ran into some difficulty now and again, with the result that diplomatic delegations were continually coming from the warring states of the interior to the rulers whose territories controlled the routes. On the whole, the Ekitiparapo found it easier to obtain military supplies through this route. Some of their men among the emigrant community of Lagos made it their business to keep up the regular supply of fire-arms through the Ondo road to the Ekitiparapo camps.—

Along all these routes and in the markets to which they led, the Yoruba exchanged their products—palm oil, palm kernels, homespun cloth etc.,—with imported goods like European cloth, salt, firetries, guns and gun-powder. Until the end of the century cowry shells constituted the leading currency. Of the Yoruba goods, palm produce accounted, in volume, for the larger part. These were the years when Europe, having abolished the overseas slave trade, attempted to substitute for it trade in the natural resources and products of tropical Africa.

However, a very important factor in the whole 19th century Yoruba situation was the fact that these years which saw the gradual shrinkage of avenues for the overseas slave trade also witnessed the political turmoils in Yorubaland which led to vastly increased enslavement of people through capture in battles. From this circumstance, there followed a number of developments.

21. S.A. Akintoye, "The Ondo road eastwards of Lagos," *Journal of African History*, X (4), 1969.

First, the production and transportation of the articles of 'legitimate' trade created a great labour demand, and this was satisfied mostly through the conversion of the war captives into slave labour. Within Yorubaland, a very profitable trade developed in slaves. Regularly from the theatres of war in the interior, slaves were taken to the main market towns—Ibadan, Abeokuta, the Ijebu towns and, after the opening of the Ondo road, the Ondo, Ikale and Ilaje towns. Slave trading on a smaller scale was practised in almost every other town in the country; some of the more capable and ambitious people all over the country raised large farms employing hundreds of slaves. An Ibadan woman chief of the 1870s had 200 slaves working on her farms. Some of the bigger traders were masters of large caravans of carriers who were mostly slaves.

Trading in slaves was far more lucrative than palm oil or homespun cloth.<sup>22</sup> For instance, in the northern Ijebu market town of Oru in the 1880s, the price of a slave varied, according to age and sex, from 40 to 80 bags of cowries: whereas two pots of palm oil sold for one bag and a good homespun cloth for two bags. Moreover, while cowries had, in any sizeable transaction, to be carried in heavy head-loads, slaves were a self-transporting currency. Consequently, as a means of exchange for the acquisition of fire-arms and other imported goods, slaves were a commodity highly sought after. This accounts for that fact, so often noted by observers of the Yoruba wars, that victors in the battles would rather capture than kill the vanquished and that not seldom, battles consisted of a series of manoeuvres to capture one's opponents. Some foreign observers, confusing means with ends, concluded from watching these battles that the cause of the wars was the desire to capture slaves for sale.

Secondly, the availability of war captives who could not be disposed of beyond the country contributed to the further development of the clientage system. The earliest war chiefs of the century built their followings from their own relations and independent, though often uprooted, young men who were willing to follow them. But as the decades rolled by, captives in battles and raids came to form the majority of each war chief's following. Some were direct captures by the chief's men, others were bought. Some of the women acquired in these ways became the chief's wives, others were given to his leading men as wives. From Ibadan, the system spread to the rest of Yorubaland, but it was in Ibadan that it saw its fullest development. In Ibadan itself, some of the more capable of the captives rose to high positions in their chiefs' households or armies or in the government of the town. Among the builders of these client groups, there was often a certain versatility, as the same men who led their followers to battles in war would, in peace, set them to cultivating extensive farms or sent them out on trading expeditions. When the CMS missionary, David Hinderer, wanted to build a new church in Ibadan late 1858, he found that he could not procure labour "either for love or money—all because everybody is wanted in the farms".<sup>23</sup> The competition among the Ibadan leaders was, therefore, not only military. It extended to a large variety of endeavours—to build impressive sprawling compounds, raise large farms, own huge trading establishments. It was on this versatility and competition that the military and economic basis of Ibadan's greatness was founded.

22. CO. 147/50, Rowe to Derby, 18 May 1883.

23. CMS. CA2/049, Hinderer's Annual letter for 1858, op. cit.

In addition to the trading activities of the people, agriculture remained an important sector of the economy during this period as it was in preceding centuries. In centres of large population agglomerations such as Ibadan, Abeokuta, Oyo and Ife, how to feed the people must at first have posed a serious problem. But since the economy was still largely agrarian as it had been in the past, the initial difficulties of settling large numbers of refugees appeared to have been quickly and easily overcome. The refugees themselves continued in their old primary profession as farmers. The chiefs who had slaves also put them to use on the farms. The extent of the farms owned by each chief reflected both the number of domestic slaves under his control and the population of his household. The result was an increase in food production. Excess food production was sold in the local markets as Bashorun Oluyole of Ibadan did to his farm products. In some cases, regular trading exchanges occurred between food surplus areas and food scarcity areas, as between the Egba at Abeokuta and the Awori at Ota from 1850s till about the end of the century, as also between the Ibadan and the Ijebu.

The importance of food production in the economy was not lost on the Yoruba. It was a regular feature of their military tactics to starve the enemy by disrupting its agricultural activities through kidnapping and molesting its farmers. A most classic example of this policy was demonstrated during the Ijaye war when Ibadan in 1861 conquered some upper Ogun towns on which Ijaye depended for its supply of foods. This hastened the final defeat of Ijaye in 1862. Throughout the sixteen years war, as early pointed out, the Egba were constantly trying to destroy Ibadan's agricultural base by raiding the Ibadan farms.

As siege warfare developed during the century, it became necessary to feed the large armies that took part in the war. Since the commissariat was very deficient in food requisition for the troops, the soldiers either lived off the surrounding districts or (and this was the usual practice) established farms and produced their own food. This happened at Ibadan war camps at Ijaye during the Ijaye war (1860-62) and at the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo camps during the sixteen years war.<sup>24</sup>

Although not directly related to the wars, the sudden change in demand in the export sector from slaves to agricultural commodities that followed Britain's efforts to stop the trans-Atlantic slave trade increased the importance of agriculture. Production of cotton by the farmers seemed to have increased for some time to satisfy the local manufacture of indigenous women cloth and to meet a part of the overseas demand. In addition, there was increased palm oil production, which in itself is closely tied in with agriculture.

Since a great number of the chiefs and many individuals, too, depended on their slaves for food and export production, they tended to treat these slaves in a humane way partly to ameliorate their position and partly to maximize their usefulness. Thus, it was almost general to give the slaves two or three days off in the week or to allow them the afternoons of each day free during which they attended to their own farms or other professions.

But agriculture was also seriously affected by the wars. It was tied in with the overall question of security, that was necessary not only to the survival of each community-as a

24. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics*.

political unit but also to the proper functioning of its economy. The extent of the cultivated farmland under the control of each of the major towns reflected the protection that each town could afford its inhabitants. In the early 1840s when Abeokuta had hardly established its power, the cultivated farms were still within a short distance outside the town walls. By the 1870s, after it had repulsed the Dahomean invasions and finally emerged as one of the important Yoruba kingdoms, its inhabitants had cultivated farmlands extending southwards for some thirty to forty miles and south-eastwards some twenty to thirty miles. In the northeast where there was general insecurity until 1894, cultivated farms did not extend beyond some five miles while to the west they did not go beyond twenty miles. The ability to afford security to its inhabitants was also shown in the extent of Ibadan farms right from the 1850s.

In Remo and Ota areas where the towns suffered heavy raids from their stronger neighbours, in particular the Egba, farming activities were greatly handicapped. Indeed, such was the heavy toll on agriculture that the people took more to trading.

### **The 19th Century: An Overview**

The toll taken by the 19th century Yoruba wars was, in terms of destruction and human suffering, enormous. In various parts of the country, whole towns and villages vanished from the face of the earth, and wide expanses of farmland were laid waste and reclaimed by jungles. Written stories of eye-witnesses are full of heart-rending accounts of the human wreckage that littered the face of Yorubaland as uncountable numbers of families were forcibly broken up year in and year out, their members scattered into different parts of the country, most never seeing one another again. And, as is to be expected in such a situation where the demand for slaves enabled some men to make a living or even a fortune on the misfortunes of their fellowmen, violent crime, treachery and brigandage became matters of routine. In fact, the common highway kidnapper and his unfortunate victims almost dominate the folk literature relating to the wars.

All these, however, were nothing more than the accompaniments of massive and intense social and political changes. Of such changes, one of the leading products was the emergence of new communities which (like Ibadan, Abeokuta, Oyo, Modakeke, Aiyede, Shagamu, etc.) have survived to our day.

The 19th century produced enormous demographic changes in Yorubaland, changes which determined the population map of south-western Nigeria as we now know it. The almost complete emptiness of the extreme north-western areas of the Oyo State and the high concentration of population in the area comprising such big communities as Abeokuta, Ibadan, Oyo, Iwo, Ede, Ejigbo, Osogbo—these were products of the 19th century demographic changes. In general, one main trend is discernible in these demographic changes. This was the movement of people from the open grassland country of northern Yorubaland to the sub-tropical forest of the south. The available evidence strongly suggests that, before the 19th century, the grasslands were the centre of the greatest concentration of the Yoruba. The 19th century reversed this order in favour of the forests and the edges of the forest to the south.

A great deal of mixing of the various Yoruba sub-groups also occurred during the 19th century. This mixing started early in the century with the migration of Oyo



people southwards into the Egba, Owu, Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti and Igbomina countries. Later, as a result of the Ibadan expansion, more Oyo came into the Ekiti, Ijesa, Akoko and Igbomina countries, while many people from these areas as well as from Iyagba and the territories further north came, or were brought, into Ibadan as well as to Osun, Egba, Ijebu. After the opening of the Ondo road, people came from all parts of the interior to trade, or settle, in the Ondo, Ikale and Ilaje towns and villages, while people were also drawn from these places into the territories of their northern neighbours. All along, Lagos was receiving a continuous flow of people from all over Yorubaland. The first of these were the Yoruba recaptives of mixed origins who, from the 1840s, began to return to Yorubaland, especially to Badagry and Lagos, from Sierra Leone and the Americas. Then as Lagos became a great market and a British colony she attracted large numbers of people from the interior countries who came as traders or as slaves fleeing to freedom. From Lagos, a continuous backwash of such people spread all over Yorubaland.

When the wars came to an end, a lot of people returned to their places of origin, but probably most remained in their new homes either because they had developed roots there or because they were no longer sure of their places of origin. Of all Yoruba communities, Ibadan represents the most intense example of this mixing.

The 19th century in Yorubaland witnessed the emergence of a number of political entities such as the Ibadan empire or the Ekitiparapo, which represented the institution of new loyalties transcending the confines of the old kingdoms or sub-ethnic divisions. The men who built Ibadan and helped to expand its political influence over much of Yorubaland (helping it, in the process, to conquer their own peoples) were imbued by a new and revolutionary type of loyalty. And in the case of the Ekitiparapo, in the last years of its existence the more radical and forward-looking of its men went so far as to suggest either the transformation of the confederacy into a kingdom or the transplantation of all the towns comprising it into one single vast metropolis. Those who championed such ideas as these were men who had attained to a state of mind that could gladly welcome the smashing up of their kingdoms or sub-ethnic groups to institute a new order of society.

Another facet of the readiness to accept new political orders was the widespread experimentation with new political constitutions. By 1800, for practically all Yoruba, the monarchy was the sanctified order of society and, even until the end of the 19th century, there were many Yoruba who still regarded communities without kings as bastards. However, during the century, with old communities breaking up and new ones emerging to meet the challenge of new conditions, the Yoruba showed much political creativeness with the resulting constitutional experimentation exemplified in Ijaye's military dictatorship, Ibadan's republicanism, Abeokuta's federalism and the confederalism of the Ekitiparapo.

An important result of the Yoruba situation of the 19th century was the rise of new leaders—the warrior chiefs. The way in which these men emerged has been earlier discussed; suffice it to say here that in the manner of their rise to leadership and in the pattern of leadership which they provided, these men represented a departure from Yoruba tradition. Moreover, they constituted a very powerful challenge to the traditional élite. It was they rather than the kings and their traditional chiefs who provided the leadership for the movement of change in Yorubaland. When Momoh Latosisa of

Ibadan frightened the Alafin by threatening to punish him for his secret encouragement of the Ekitiparapo; when Chief Onafowokan of Ijebu sent the Awujale fleeing from Ijebu-Ode into exile; when Chief Ogedengbe, the leader of the Ekitiparapo forces, boasted that what he commanded no Ekiti or Ijesa king could alter—each was giving expression to the power of the new over the old elite. But every Yoruba town with the exception of Ibadan tried to ensure some legitimacy for kingship. Although rulers might have been deposed by outstanding war captains, kingship retained some degree of influence over the common man. It remained the centre of his cultural, political and judicial life. Thus, in all cases of deposition of rulers, care was taken to install others in their places. This ensured a cultural and political continuity with the past. Furthermore one of the consequences of the establishment of British rule over Yorubaland after 1893 was the destruction of the power of the new elite and the bolstering up of the power of the old. For one of the first actions of the British officials was to arrest some of the major war chiefs and break up their followings.

For the common man also, these developments occasioned considerable loss of personal freedom. As has been earlier pointed out, the growth of insecurity and danger conditioned people's minds to submit their independence to leading men. As time went on, this trend developed to a stage that, a city like Ibadan, the only sure way of ensuring respect for one's person was to be known to belong to the household of this or that chief. And to belong to a big chief's compound conferred upon a man the right to ill-use other men with impunity. As the CMS missionary, J.B. Wood, noted,<sup>25</sup> at Ibadan the chief's slaves enjoyed much liberty and, knowing that they could not be easily called to account for their evil deeds, were often guilty of evil doing "of which the free Ibadans are not seldom the victims". A wronged person dared not complain as the chiefs usually took the side of their slaves—"so, practically Ibadan itself is under the slaves of the great chiefs". The same pattern of behaviour was taken by the Ibadan to the provinces of the Ibadan empire—with terrible consequences for human freedom and dignity in those places.

Despite all these changes that accompanied the wars, societal institutions survived in a way that demonstrated some continuity with the pre-1800 situation. Like their counterparts before 1800, the chiefs and their households remained an important base in the political, social and economic organization of the different Yoruba communities. The clientage system whereby an individual was hardly fully free to stand on his own except he was associated with a powerful lineage in the community was, as earlier pointed out, also in some way a continuation of the pre-1800 practice. And above all, the economy was still based mostly on agriculture. It was impossible to change these fundamental bases of the society overnight and the 'new men' had to operate within established limits and modify them gradually. With the stoppage of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, for example, they came to place greater emphasis on export agriculture than on external slave trade.

Finally, the political tumult in Yorubaland constituted the excuse for increasing British interference in Yoruba affairs during the century and the ultimate imposition of British rule on Yorubaland. As has been pointed out, the British had invaded Lagos

25. CMS (Y) 4/1/8, "Notes and Letters of the Rev. J.B. Wood, 1881-96".

in 1851 and then placed a colonial administration there ten years later because they had hoped to use Lagos as an outlet to tap the trade of Yorubaland. However, the political complications of Yorubaland frequently interrupted the trade and thereby called for further British intervention. The area of British interference gradually spread from Ijebu, Egba and Ibadan to eastern Yorubaland and, during the sixteen years war, to the far interior. Throughout this long war, the Lagos administration frequently acted as peace maker. The growth of the scramble for colonies among the British, French and Germans in West Africa in the 1880s led to increased British interest and interference in Yorubaland and inclined the British government to yield at last to the pressure of merchants and missionaries for the use of force to restore peace in Yorubaland. The officials of the British administration of Lagos were responsible for getting the belligerent parties to agree to the 1886 treaty and the 1893 settlement.

On both of these occasions, the British employed some show of force. In 1892, in the invasion and conquest of the Ijebu kingdom, they employed maximum force decisively. Then late in 1893, they compelled Ibadan to accept a British resident official who would see to the continued observance of peace in the Yoruba interior. This was the first major formal step in the establishment of British control over Yorubaland beyond Lagos. Meanwhile, the political influence of the Royal Niger Company was penetrating into the northern Yoruba territories from the Niger. From 1893 on British political influence, expressed at first as haphazard efforts to maintain the peace, developed until by the last year of the century Yorubaland became the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos.

## THE ESTABLISHED CALIPHATE: SOKOTO, THE EMIRATES AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

SA'AD ABUBAKAR

The jihad in Hausaland came to an end in 1809, but fighting for the establishment of emirates as part of a wider Caliphate continued in places throughout the first half of the 19th century. In the 1820s the emirates on Nupe and Ilorin were established,<sup>1</sup> a decade later Misau and Jama'are emerged<sup>2</sup> and finally Kontagora was founded in 1859.<sup>3</sup> The eventual polity that emerged under the Caliph comprised the two capitals, Sokoto and Gwandu, founded over the former Hausa states of Gobir, Zamfara and parts of Kebbi as well as over twenty emirates.<sup>4</sup> Apart from those mentioned above, the other emirates included Daura, Katsina, Kano, Kazaure and Zaria to the east and southeast of Sokoto.<sup>5</sup> Then, there were Hadejia, Katagum, Gombe, Bauchi, Fombia and Hamarua to the east of Hausaland, and Agaie, Lapai and Lafiagi to the south.<sup>6</sup> The influence and authority of the Caliph also extended over Yawuri which was under

1. For a more detailed history of the emirates of Nupe, see M. Mason, "The Nupe Kingdom in the 19th century: A Political History", Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1970, and S.A. Balogun, "The Gwandu Emirates", Ph.D. Ibadan, 1970; it also covers the emirate of Ilorin.
2. W.F. Gowers, *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, London, 1921, pp. 33-36.
3. E.C. Duff, *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, London, 1920, pp. 8-13 and Husaini, *Kafawar Mulkin Fulani a Kasar Kwatagora*, Zaria, 1968.
4. For fuller accounts of the Caliphate see D.M. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London, 1967, R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906*, London, 1971.
5. See Gowers, op. cit., pp. 8-30 and M.G. Smith, *Government on Zazzau*, Oxford, 1960.
6. For details about some of these emirates see V.N. Low, *Three Nigerian Emirates*, Evanston, 1973; J.M. Fremantle, "History of the Katagum Emirate", *Journal of Social Anthropology*, X, 1910, A.Y. Aliyu, "The foundation of Bauchi Emirate", (NARP, 1st interim Report, 1972, pp. 44-61, S.Abubakar, *The Lamibe of Fombina: a Political History of Adamawa, 1809-1901*, (forthcoming), and also "The Establishment of Fulbe authority in the Upper Benue Basin 1809-47", *SAVANNA*, Vol. 1, No. 1 June 1972, pp. 67-80. See also A. Saleh, "Crisis and Conflict in the Middle Benue Basin: c. 1817-1903", B.A. Hons dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, 1973; J.M. Fremantle, *Gazetteer of Muri Province*, London, 1922.

aman (trust) and over parts of *Kasar Kebbi*, such as *Arewa*, *Zaberma*, *Dendi* and *Gurma*.<sup>7</sup>

The Sokoto Caliphate was not a unitary state but one which, like the present Nigeria, comprised autonomous emirates each with its emir and government. The polity was not located on a continuous stretch of territory as it contained diverse independent communities and states within its borders. Thus the *Chopu Alela* of the *Lelna* and the territories of the other *Gwari* groups separated the northern from the southern emirates. Similarly, the central highlands with its diverse peoples formed a big block of independent territory bordering the emirates of *Bauchi*, *Hamarua* and *Zaria*.<sup>8</sup> Other areas like *Gumel*, *Ningi* and the region north of the *Gongola*—*Hawal* confluence never formed part of the Sokoto Caliphate.<sup>9</sup>

This study is more concerned with relations, political, social and economic between the emirates and Sokoto on the one hand and between the Caliphate and its neighbours on the other. This, apart from examining the internal problems arising from the operation of the Caliphate system, we shall also deal with the response of the Caliphates to the various threats from its neighbours. In the conclusion, an attempt will be made to assess the impact of the religious, political and other changes which the foundation of the Caliphate sought to bring about.

### Relations between Sokoto and its Emirates

Even though the Caliph was the head of the Caliphate, he had very little to do with the day running of affairs in the emirates. His role was limited to giving his guidance from time to time so as to keep the system going. Only the metropolis was under his direct administration. Nevertheless, the Caliph through his wazir and the Emir of *Gwandu* occasionally intervened in the affairs of the emirates either to prevent or correct deviations from the established Islamic practice. His most important role in the Caliphate was the appointment of emirs. The first emirs were not selected and appointed by the Shehu, but were local leaders who called on the Shehu and got his blessings and flags. After that, it became the practice for emirates to recommend candidates to Sokoto for appointment as emirs and, in most cases, the Caliph merely confirmed and installed local nominees. However, the situation changed in respect of some emirates. In *Zaria*, for example, the Caliph had, in the course of the 19th

7. See M. Adamu, "A Hausa Government in Decline: *Yawuri* in the 19th century", M.A. thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, 1968) and M.B. Alkali, *A Hausa Community in Crisis: Kebbi in the 19th century*", M.A. thesis Ahmadu Bello University, 1969.

8. *Zaria* emirate extended through its sub-emirates of *Keffi* and *Nasarawa* southwards to the river *Benue*. See Smith, op. cit., pp. 140-41.

9. Other areas which were outside the Sokoto Caliphate were *Igalaland*, *Idomaland* and that region between the emirates of *Mamarua* (*Muri*) *Gombe* and *Fombina*.



century, acquired very strong control over not only the appointment and deposition of emirs but over the administration generally.<sup>10</sup>

The case of Zaria is unique, but even then, Sokoto had acquired strong control not because Zaria was so near to it but largely because of the rivalry and division within the emirate. After all, Zaria was not nearer to Sokoto than were Katsina, Daura and Kano emirates. In 1897 the three ruling houses in Zaria put aside their differences united behind a single candidate. Consequently, the Waziri Bukhari had to drop the Caliph's choice for the emirship in favour of the popular Muhammadu Kwassau.<sup>11</sup> With regard to depositions in Zaria and elsewhere, this power was exercised in response to popular local demands. Sidi Abdulkadir of Zaria was deposed in the 1850s for serious political and moral offences. Similarly, Sambo was removed from office because he was unable to defend Zaria against external enemies, Ningi, Maradi and Abuja.<sup>12</sup> Other offences likely to lead to the deposition of emirs by the Caliph included oppression and arbitrariness in the appointment and deposition of office-holders.<sup>13</sup>

In the distant emirates, the control of the Caliph, especially with regard to the appointment of emirs, was not very strong. In Fombina, the death of the *lamido* (emir) Lawal b. Modibbo Adama in 1872 was followed by a serious succession dispute.<sup>14</sup> The electors in Yola put forward Umaru Sanda for the emirship. The leading claimant, both from the point of view of age and Islamic scholarship, Hamidu b. Modibbo Adama, protested to Sokoto. The Caliph directed that he should be appointed but this was turned down by the officials in Yola. A serious confrontation which could have impaired the good relations between Sokoto and Fombina was averted by the untimely death of Hamidu.

In the emirate of Nuri, the chief of Bakundi, Burba, succeeded to the emirship in 1869 even though the electors had recommended Abubakar b. Hamman Wabi and had obtained the necessary approval from Sokoto.<sup>15</sup> Burba's usurpation of the emirship from his uncle was effected through a combination of force and bribery. Sarkin Raba, the Sokoto official who had come for the installation of Abubakar had no alternative but to turban Burba. In the 1890s the electors in Jalinge had, after obtaining approval from Sokoto, declared the Emir Muhammad Abubakar deposed.

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10. For the dynastic history of Zaria see M.G. Smith, op. cit. pp. 141-96. As early as 1859 the Emir Abdulkadir was deposed by the Caliph Aliyu Babba for very serious political and moral offences; in 1871 the Emir Abdullah was deposed for disobedience and Abubakar was unilaterally appointed by the Caliph. In 1874 Abdullah was re-installed, again the officials in Zaria were not consulted and in 1878 before Sambo was installed as emir he was directed by Sokoto to appoint certain individuals to three top offices, Madaki, Wambi and Galadima. Thus, by the 1870s the Caliphs had the power to get whoever they like appointed as emir in Zaria and to decide who should be what in the emirate government.

11. Ibid. p. 194.

12. Ibid. p. 187.

13. The Emir Saddik of Katsina was deposed in 1844 for oppression and Usman of Missau in 1861 for arbitrary dismissal of office holders;

14. S. Abubakar, *Lamibe of Fombina*, p. 278.

15. *Jalingo Traditions* (collected by author, April 1973, NHRS).

But when the Caliph's representative arrived to install a new emir, he found that Muhammad had sorted things out and was in full control of the government. Thus, Muhammad Abubakar was re-turbanned the Emir of Muri.<sup>16</sup> It does appear that in so far as the distant emirates were concerned the Caliphs maintained an open mind and whoever had the situation in the emirate under his control was usually confirmed as emir.

The obligations of the emirs to the Caliphs were numerous. It was obligatory on all emirs to visit Sokoto on the appointment of a new Caliph and subsequently, from time to time. The first visit was to do allegiance and the subsequent ones to ensure continued support. Adeleye points out that failure to attend the meeting of *manyan Sarakuna* (leading emirs) in Sokoto was generally seriously viewed by the Caliphs.<sup>17</sup> Muhammadu Manga of Misau was deprived of his extra-territorial rights over the Felata Borno for not making the customary visit to Sokoto.<sup>18</sup> Payment of tribute was also incumbent on all the emirs and the loyalty of the individual emirs was measured by the promptness and regularity of payment. Similarly, the volume of tribute was determined by the wealth of the emirate and the degree of its loyalty to Sokoto.

Kano, the emporium of the Caliphate, used to send as much as five million cowries to Sokoto annually, while Zaria and Katsina usually sent two million and half a million cowries respectively.<sup>19</sup> The eastern emirates, Bauchi and Fombina among others usually sent slaves as tribute, which from the latter emirate had at one time amounted to over a thousand.<sup>20</sup> Apart from tribute some emirs sent voluntary *kyauta* (gifts) along with their letters to the Caliph.<sup>21</sup> It was also obligatory for all emirs to send to the Caliph one-fifth of booty obtained from jihad wars as well as *irth* derived from the property of deceased officials.

The emirs were also expected to send *maddad* to the Caliph. The various emirates of the Caliphate were established by the first emirs, each leading his own forces without any military aid from the *amir al-muminin*. Thus, as Adeleye points out, the expansion of the polity was achieved not through joint expeditions organized and despatched from one base, but through the efforts of each emirate.<sup>22</sup> The Caliphate therefore had neither a standing nor a regular army for its defence, rather, each emirate tackled its defence problems. But it was the practice to send military contingents to Sokoto whenever there were serious threats. As early as 1826 when Borno threatened Kano, the Caliph Bello ordered the Emir of Bauchi to rally the

16. Ibid.

17. Adeleye, op. cit., p. 84.

18. Ibid., p. 91.

19. See H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North & Central Africa*, London, 1857, vol. III, p. 116.

20. Abubakar, *Lamibe*, p. 253. The number of slaves sent as tribute varied from year to year. After the death of Lamido Lawal in 1872 fewer slaves were sent because of decreasing warfare, decline in Yola's military efficacy and persistent revolts by sub-emirs.

21. It was impolite to send letters unaccompanied with gifts, so letters to Sokoto went along with small gifts, such as cloth, a few slaves, a horse or a cow.

22. Adeleye, op. cit., p. 47.

eastern emirates against al-Kanemi.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, when Sokoto was threatened by the Gobirawa, Atiku moved against Tsibiri in 1842 after obtaining levies from the eastern emirates.<sup>24</sup> Finally, during the rebellion of Buhari an army made up of contingents from Zamfara, Kano and Zaria attempted to deal with it.<sup>25</sup> Even though not all the emirates were involved in the periodic mobilization in defence of Sokoto, one can talk of the existence of a co-operative defence system in the Caliphate.<sup>26</sup> The peace and security of the metropolis, no doubt, depended upon the continued military support of the neighbouring emirates. That down to the end of the 19th century the neighbouring emirates continued to rally behind Sokoto in the event of serious internal and external threats is a measure of the strength of the Caliphate system and the degree of loyalty it enjoyed.

The functions of the Caliphs in Sokoto were not merely to appoint and depose emirs. As the supreme judge of the shari'a, the Caliphs had to supervise the working of the emirate system and to arbitrate in disputes within and between emirates. He was expected to issue a *fatwa* on legal issues, such as the recovery of absconded slaves and validity (or otherwise) of expeditions that resulted in enslavement. Similarly, in the event of territorial disputes between emirates the Caliph was expected to intervene and arbitrate. In the 1890s, for example, the Caliph Abdurrahman sent his Calidima to settle the dispute between Daura and Kazaure. He also settled the disputes between Gusau and Zamfara over the border town of Doko.<sup>27</sup> But it was not always that disputes were successfully settled by the Caliph. When Kontagora under Ibrahim conquered Bene within Zaria emirate and threatened Jere on the Gurara River, the Emir Yero, probably reluctant to fight against a leading member of the Sokoto ruling family, appealed to the Caliph Abdurrahman.<sup>28</sup> But no action was taken probably because the 1897 *coup d'état* in Zaria had alienated the Caliphal authority and so Kontagora continued its activities within Zaria's territory down to the end of the century.

The most serious disputes were between the eastern emirates, especially those in the *Guderi* region. Right from about mid-century Misau was continually involved in one conflict or the other. During the 1881 civil war in Bauchi, Sale of Misau's intervention was decisive in the defeat of the rebel Halilu by the Emir Usman.<sup>29</sup> There were also conflicts between Misau and Katagum over Isawa, a town which had refused to revert to the former's control when the Caliph restored to it the extra-territorial control over the Felata Borno.<sup>30</sup> But following the intervention of the Caliph Aliyu Babba, the

23. For a full account of this episode see H. Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition*, London, 1829, pp. 242ff. R.M. East, *Labaran Hausawa da Makwataktansu*, i, Zaria, 1934, pp. 43ff and L. Brenner, *The Shehus of Kujawa*, London, 1973, pp. 55-58.

24. Last, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

25. Though it was a one-way affair, it was not customary for Sokoto to send military aid to the emirates and co-operation between emirates was unknown.

26. Gowers, op. cit., p. 22.

27. Blackwell, *The Occupation of Hausaland*, Lagos, 1927, pp. 24-25.

28. Smith, op. cit. p. 195.

29. A.Y. Aliyu 'The Bauchi Civil War of 1881', *SAVANNA*, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1973, pp. 183-99.

30. Adeleye, op. cit. i. 84.

Emir Muhammad al-Hajj of Katagum desisted from attacking Misau and so the conflict ended.

The Emir Muhammad Manga of Misau also interfered in the revolt of the Galadima Ako against Umar of Gombe in 1899.<sup>31</sup> In fact, it was the support from Misau that strengthened and escalated the rebellion. By sending an armed party to Ako, Muhammad manga provided a much needed assistance to the rebels. Powerless, the Emir Umar of Gombe appealed to the Emir of Bauchi for arbitration.<sup>32</sup> The latter urged the Galadima to submit and asked the Emir of Gombe to move his forces from Tukulma so as to create a favourable climate for negotiations. The matter was finally passed to the Caliph Abdurrahman who appointed Wali Shehu to investigate the affair. Following the submission a report, the Caliph directed the Emir of Misau to withdraw his support and the Galadima to seek his Emir's pardon. Thus, serious open hostilities were avoided.

By and large, the working of the Caliphate system had neither weakened nor broken down by the beginning of this century. The continued payment of tribute, the despatch of greeting letters along with small gifts to the Caliph, the Wazir and the Emir of Gwandu, in respect of the western emirates characterised the system. Similarly, through periodic visits to the emirates by officials from Gwandu and Sokoto, the Caliph was not only fully informed about events to the fall of Sokoto in 1903 the emirs remained not only loyal and obedient but they looked up to the Caliph for leadership and direction. His position as the final arbiter in disputes within and between emirates was valued and respected. Even though administratively the Caliphate was decentralized, it in fact enjoyed more central direction than has generally been recognized.

### Internal Crisis and Conflicts

In the course of the 19th century, the Sokoto Caliphate grappled with a number of serious internal conflicts, such as the Buhari rebellion of 1850-63, the Talata—Anka revolt of 1891, the *basasa* (civil-war) of 1894-6 in Kano, and Mahdism during the last two decades of the century. Similarly, the component emirates of the Caliphate faced grave internal problems, such as rebellion by conquered groups, vassal chiefs or by subordinate officials which particularly characterize the history of Zaria and Fombina.

In c. 1850 the Ciroma Buhari usurped the emirship in Hadejia and was confirmed by Sokoto after sending large presents to the Waziri Abd al-Qadir b. Gidado.<sup>33</sup> He

31. Ibid. p. 91.

32. Ibid., p. 92. But according to Last, op. cit., pp. 137-38, Gombe's appeal was to the Caliph who then directed, through his wazir, Misau to withdraw and the Emir of Gombe to pardon the Galadima. But this failed and so Bauchi was requested to mediate. The subsequent settlement favoured the rebels but death eliminated some of the hostility.

33. For details about the Buhari episode see, Last, op. cit. pp. 88-89; 159-60; Adeleye, op. cit., pp. 94-95 and Gowers, op. cit., p. 22-3. Another interesting account is contained in East, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 99-103.

subsequently incurred the displeasure of the Caliph when, in a bid to preserve his position, he assassinated his cousin Nalara, the influential chief of Auyo. Summoned to Sokoto, Buhari, fearing that he might be deposed, refused to go. But he later met and conferred with the Waziri who had visited Katagum. It appears that no agreement was arrived at and so an expedition comprising levies from Katagum and other eastern emirates attacked and took control of Hadejia. The Waziri appointed Ahmad, a younger brother of Buhari, as the new emir. Not long afterwards, Buhari led a counter-attack during which he easily routed the Waziri's army and put his brother to death. Thus, peaceful reconciliation with Sokoto was clearly impossible. While Buhari was in real control of the emirate, the Caliph appointed a pretender, Tukur, who resided in Katagum, as the Emir of Hadejia.

Buhari, with the active support of the Shehu Umar of Borno, had successfully withdrawn his allegiance to Sokoto. The military machinery of the Caliphate was incapable of subduing him and so Hadejia was ostracized by the other emirates till 1863 when Buhari died. Subsequently, Sokoto regained control and the emirate of Hadejia was welcomed back into the community of the Caliphate. Even though Buhari had successfully stood his grounds militarily against the Caliph, his example was not followed by the other emirates,<sup>34</sup> and even though within Hadejia emirate the rebellion was unpopular with the people, it persisted for over a decade as a "revolt of one man rather than that of an emirate".<sup>35</sup>

The next revolt against the Caliph in Sokoto was in 1891 at Talata Mafara within the metropolis. The cause of the revolt was the granting of a disputed town, Binrin Tudu, to the chief of Burmi by Sokoto.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in 1891 when Abdurrahman was appointed Caliph, Buzu, the chief of Talata with the support of the chief of Anka, refused to visit Sokoto for the traditional homage. The two chiefs were declared rebels and all emirates were directed to cease all intercourse with them. Then, the Caliph led a big force and encircled the rebel towns. Consequently, the people of Talata Mafara deposed their chief and sued for peace. Anka, the other town had no alternative but to follow suit.<sup>37</sup>

Two years after the *tawaye* (rebellion) at Talata Mafara, the Caliph Abdurahman faced a much more serious crisis, the *basasa* (civil war) in Kano.<sup>38</sup> Following the death of the Emir Muhammad Bello in 1893, Sokoto appointed his elder son, Tukur. Thus Yusuf b. Abdullah, a leading candidate since the death of his father in 1883, was by-passed for the second time. Some of the reasons advanced for the Caliph's appointment of Tukur rather than the popular Yusuf were the need to reward the former for

34. Except perhaps Zaria during the reign of the Emir Sidi Abdulkadir in 1860 when he forbade the Waziri of Sokoto to enter Zaria and also refused to be crowned. When asked to explain certain actions he took, Sidi replied that "these were not Sokoto affairs" ("Sarauta na gaje shi"). A clear indication of his preparedness to emphasize Zaria's autonomy. See Smith, op. cit., pp. 163-64.

35. Adeleye, op. cit., p. 95 note.

36. Last, op. cit., pp. 130-34.

37. Ibid. But the price for peace was too heavy for the rebels, all captives had to be realised, an indemnity of a thousand slaves and surrender of all conquered lands, p. 133.

38. See A. Dokaji *Kano ta Dabo Cigari*, Zaria, 1958, pp. 61-67. Gowers, op. cit., pp. 13-14 and Last, Caliphate, pp. 134-36.



his bravery exhibited during an expedition against Argungu in 1891 and also in appreciation of his father's exemplary loyalty to Sokoto.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, neither the people nor the officials in Kano were pleased with Tukur's appointment. The attempts by the Waziri of Sokoto to avert a serious crisis failed as Yusuf, his brother and their supporters moved out of Kano to Takai.<sup>40</sup>

While in Takai, Yusuf, having failed to obtain external support, built up his position and spread his control over the countryside. In a bid to end the rebellion, the Caliph Abdurrahman ordered the Waziri to deal with the situation militarily. He also directed the emirs and all loyal citizens to cease contact with the rebels. The Waziri moved to Kano and rallied support to confront Yusuf but he found situation beyond his measure and so he appealed to Hadejia for military aid. Even though the Emir of Hadejia was loyal to Sokoto, he made no positive move, probably because of his sympathy for Yusuf.<sup>41</sup> The latter, unchecked, continued to threaten life and property in the environs of Kano.

Further moves to end the rebellion failed. There was a general feeling in the emirates that the Caliph's appointment of Tukur was not right. The Emir of Hadejia for example openly called upon the Waziri of Sokoto to depose Tukur in favour of Yusuf, and the Emir Ibrahim of Kontagora refused to fight Yusuf, as a fellow Muslim.<sup>42</sup> There is no doubt that the emirates were reluctant to give military support to the Caliph against the rebels in Kano. They were also apprehensive of coming out openly in full support of Yusuf. He, however, obtained the support of Gumel and Ningi. Thus, in 1894 he inflicted a serious defeat on Tukur's largest army.<sup>43</sup> Shortly afterwards Yusuf died and was succeeded by his brother Aliyu who succeeded in forcing himself into Kano in September 1894. Tukur fled and took refuge in Katsina emirate.<sup>44</sup> Continuing the campaign against the rebels, the Waziri of Kano tried to raise another force, but found it impossible. A small force, from Katsina was routed and so the emir withdrew on a pretext of an invasion from Maradi. Hadejia followed the example of Katsina. Events moved faster; in March 1895 Tukur was cornered and captured. His death at Gulum shortly afterwards removed the biggest obstacle to reconciliation with Sokoto.<sup>45</sup>

The revolt in Kano was not against the Caliph in person but against an unpopular decision. The subsequent *basasa* was not for secession, but was fundamentally over succession, the struggle by a ruling house to achieve what it rightly deserves but which was denied it by the caprice of a superior authority. The failure of the Caliph to crush the rebellion, certainly harmed the prestige of the Caliph and exposed the powerlessness of Sokoto to assert its will without the support of the emirates. It is little wonder

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39. Tribute from Kano during Bello's reign jumped from five to fifteen million cowries, see Adeleye, *op. cit.*, p. 86 note.

40. Gowers, pp. 13-14.

41. Adeleye, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

42. Last, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

43. Adeleye, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

44. Gowers, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

45. *Ibid.* But according to Last (p. 136) and Adeleye (p. 102) Tukur was killed by the forces of the rebels.

therefore that Caliph Abdurrahman accepted Aliyu's apology and confirmed him as the Emir of Kano.

Apart from the Caliph, a number of emirs have had to deal with various problems within their emirates. The Ako rebellion and the civil war in Bauchi, referred to above, are but some of such problems which faced some emirs. In Fombina, the big problem was not that emanating from the subjugation of 'heathen tribes' but that which concerned replacing Fulbe lineage leadership with that of the emir. Indeed, wars for expansion as well as against recalcitrant ethnic groups had been going on throughout the 19th century, but by far the most serious revolts came from Fulbe groups and from sub-emirs. As early as the 1820s Hamman Njundi revolted against Modibbo Adama and it was the intervention of Sokoto that settled the matter.<sup>46</sup> Then, in the 1840s Rai-Buba threw off its allegiance to the Lamido and the expedition from Yola had to return after an unsuccessful siege which lasted four months.<sup>47</sup> From then to the capture of Yola by the British in 1901 relations with Rai-Buba remained unfriendly. Following the example of Rai-Buba, Tibati too became restive; its chief, Hamman Sambo obtained a separate flag from the Caliph Atiku in c. 1842 after sending a gift of many slaves.<sup>48</sup> But at a meeting of all the Fulbe leaders at Beka, Modibbo Adama was reconciled with his rebellious vassal.

There were, in addition to internal rebellion, serious disputes and conflicts between the sub-emirates in Fombina during the reign of the Lamido Lawal.<sup>49</sup> The challenges to the position of the emir also continued. The first was that in Bundang led by the scholar, Modibbo Adama Agana, who probably saw himself as the best qualified to rule the emirate. After all, the Lamido Lawal "was not a scholar, his appointment was not on the basis of consultation, he was unilaterally appointed by Yola, neither the scholars outside it nor the sub-emirs were consulted".<sup>49</sup> The seriousness of the revolt led to a joint Yola and Ngaundere expedition under the command of the Lamido himself. Bundang was captured and the rebel scholar was brought to Yola as a prisoner. Further revolts against Yola came from Madagali under Buba Chujito and Uba under Jauro Illiyasa in the 1880s.<sup>50</sup> Then, there were dynastic disputes in Tibati, Banyo and Rai-Buba which the Lamibe in Yola found impossible to resolve.<sup>51</sup> Thus against the background of conflicts within the emirate, dynastic disputes and revolts against Yola, the Fulbe found it extremely difficult to consolidate their control over the various 'heathen tribes' within the perimeter of the emirate and this explains the persistence of a state of war in Fombina throughout the 19th century.

The main internal problem in Muri was also dynastic. The conflict between Gassol, Bakundi and Muri over the emirship hampered progress of consolidation in the emirate.<sup>52</sup> There was also the problem posed by the Kona Jukun who had been in

46. S. Abubakar, *Lamibe*, p. 179.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 253ff.

50. S. Abubakar, "The Islamic Community in Yola in the 19th century", *Kano Studies*, New Series, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1974, forthcoming.

51. S. Abubakar, *Lamibe*, pp. 293-94.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 294-304.

revolt off and on down to 1892 when, aided by Mizon, the Emir Muhammad Abubakar conquered them.<sup>53</sup> The dynastic dispute in the emirate gave rise to two serious civil wars; (the *konu* war) Yola Mbodewa between Gassel and Jalingo in 1894-95 and the *konu* Wuzu in 1897 between Hassan and his younger brother, the Tafida Hammuan.<sup>54</sup> The two civil wars left the emirate weak and desolate.

The problems confronting the southern emirates were not very different from those in the other parts of the Caliphate. Nupe, for example, was bedevilled by a very complex dynastic conflict.<sup>55</sup> The ousted Nupe did not give up hope of regaining its inheritance and so conflicts characterized its relations with the Fulbe ruling house.

There was at the same time a struggle for the emirship between Usman Zaki and Masaba, both sons of Dendo, which lasted to the mid-century. In c. 1841 Masaba ousted his brother from the emirship, two years later he faced a serious challenge from the Nupe dynasty and the Emir of Gwandu had to intervene to stabilize the situation.<sup>56</sup> In c. 1847 the shadow *etsu*, Maza, in alliance with a mercenary general, Umar Ba-Haushe revolted against the Fulbe and forced Masaba to escape to Ilorin. Thus, the Nupe emirate was plunged into civil war which lasted to 1856 when the rebels were defeated by Umaru Majigi. But serious revolts continued against the Fulbe. Masaba had to deal with a revolt in Mokwa and Umaru Magiji dealt ruthlessly with the rebellious Nupe, Gbedegi and Ebe.

In c. 1868 relations between the emirates of Lapai, Agaie and Bida were strained following raids into their territories by Nupe.<sup>58</sup> Obviously, the Emir of Nupe saw no reason why his petty neighbours should not be under his authority. However, the intervention of Gwandu whose emir asked the three emirates to 'live and let live' settled the dispute. The successor of Masaba in Nupe, Umaru Majigi, faced two minor risings which resulted in the Fagbagba and the Ganegan wars.<sup>59</sup> The latter extended into the reign of Maliki, 1884-95, which was also characterized by punitive expeditions against the *Okun* Yoruba and their neighbours who became restive due to increased taxation, and tribute.

The other emirate in the south, Ilorin, was for most of the 19th century free from dynastic rivalry and other internal troubles. The conflict with Offa which the Balogun Kakara ruthlessly suppressed in 1891, after thirteen years prolonged hostility, stands out as the most serious strife in the emirate.<sup>60</sup> The accession of Moma to the emirship in 1891, brought the internal strife to an end opened up prospects for peace and reconciliation. But the new policy was opposed by the Balogun Gambari and Alanamu

53. A. Saleh, *Crisis and Conflict*.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Jalingo Traditions*.

56. See M. Mason, *Nupe Kingdom*, pp. 73-184.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. E.G.M. Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, London, 1920, p. 18.

who made fortunes from terrorizing the countryside. Thus, the Emir Moma was eliminated in *coup d'état* in 1895.<sup>61</sup> Sulaiman was appointed emir by the Balogun Alanamu who wielded effective power and authority down to the advent of the British.

The various problems within the Caliphate, outlined above, varied from one emirate to another. But the problems posed by Mahdism were universal, though the degree of threat varied from one part of the Caliphate to the other. The expectations of al-Mahdi predate the jihad, but it became a problem only during the last two decades of the 19th century.<sup>62</sup> The emigration of Hayat b. Sa'id, a leading member of the family of Dan Fodio, from Sokoto to Fombina in the 1870s and his subsequent acceptance of Muhammad Ahmad as the al-Mahdi, were followed by attempts to spread the movement to all parts of the Sokoto Caliphate. In a series of letters to the Caliph and some emirs, Hayat, as the khalifa of the Mahdi in the western Sudan,<sup>63</sup> exhorted them to emigrate. His planned eastward emigration was put off by the death of Muhammad Ahmad in 1885. Hayat however, propagated his beliefs about the Mahdi. Consequently, he attracted to Balda, his base in the north-east of Fombina, dissidents, malcontents and Islamic fanatics. Thus his influence spread and by the 1880s he had become a big threat to the Lamido in Fombina and a source of anxiety to the Sokoto Caliphate.

Through local campaigns and raids against the sub-emirates in *waila* (north) and *funange* (east) Hayat extended his territory and established the nucleus for the Mahdist Caliphate.

But when Zubairu became the Lamido in Yola in 1890 he faced the Mahdist problems squarely.<sup>64</sup> With the permission of the Caliph Abdurrahman, a grand expedition moved against Balda in 1892. In the *konu* Balda which resulted, Zubairu was defeated even though Balda, the Mahdist base, was destroyed by the forces of Lamido Sali of Marua.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, Hayat emigrated to join Rabih b. Fadlallah at Manjaffa and this removed the threats posed by Mahdism within Fombina. What persisted down to the end of the 19th century was the fear of Hayat combining with Rabih to invade the emirate.

The Mahdist movement was not allowed to develop in other emirate. In an effort to check its growth and spread, the Caliphs, right from 1837, had been instructing the

61. Balogun, *Gwandu Emirates*, pp. 284-86.

62. Ibid. p. 286. See also Herman-Hodge, H.B. *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, London, 1929, p. 72.

63. For details about Mahdism see Al-Hajj, M.A. *The Mahdist Tradition in Northern Nigeria* (Ph.D. unpub. ABU, 1973), Abubakar S. *Lamibe*, pp. 305-316; 324-329. Sa'id, A.G. *Mahdist in Northern Nigeria: Tension of Teaching and Society* (B.Sc. Essay, AEU 1972). Njeuma, M. "Adamawa and Mahdism: the career of Hayat ibn. Sa'id in Adamawa 1878-98" (*JAH*, xii, No. 1, 1971).

64. Hayat obtained a *manshura* (proclamation) from the Mahdi intended for the Western Sudan (in possession of Dr. Junaidu) where he was empowered to proclaim Mahdism, summon the people to the obligation of the hijra and to follow the book and sunna. Letters between Hayat and the Mahdi are published in *Min al-Khitabat al-Mutabadala baina al-Imam al-Mahdi wa Shaykh Hayat*, Khartoum, 1962, 3rd reprint.

65. Abubakar, op. cit., pp. 324-29.

emirs to prevent mass emigration to the east.<sup>66</sup> In 1882-83 for example, Liman Yamusa on an emigration to the east with his supporters from Dutsen Gadawur, was intercepted by the Emir of Hadejia and Misau.<sup>67</sup> He was eventually arrested at Gwadayi and sent to Sokoto. Similarly, all the emirs turned a deaf ear to Hayat's call to embrace Mahdism. But the call gained the hearing of some common folks and scholars, especially in the eastern emirates. One of such scholars was Jibrin, a native of Zai in Katagum, who established his base at Burmi and began to threaten the position of the Emirs of Gombe.<sup>68</sup> His activities also spread panic in the neighbouring emirates of Bauchi, Misau, Katagum and Hadejia.

In a move to end the Mahdist threats, the Caliph Umar b. Ali directed the Emir of Bauchi to organize the defence of the eastern emirates and deal with Jibrin. Mobilizing the armies of the eastern emirates, the Emir Umar of Bauchi defeated Jibrin and forced him to sue for a permanent peace at Bajiga.<sup>70</sup> But shortly afterwards Jibrin re-opened raids against the neighbouring emirates and repulsed a combined expedition from Bauchi, Gombe and Misau. Thus, the Mahdist at Burni was not subdued and down to the end of the 19th century he remained the greatest menace to Gombe, Misau and Bauchi.

Mahdism in the Sokoto Caliphate was aimed at replacing the existing order. Hayat's call for an all out support for the movement and the tendering of allegiance to him as the Mahdist khalifa in the western Sudan was tantamount to the dissolution of the Sokoto Caliphate. Thus, the Caliph and his emirs were not prepared to accept the Mahdi of the Sudan as genuine. Moreover, in Fombina Hayat stood as a rival to the Lamido in whose territory the Mahdist operated while the eastern emirates were being harassed by Jibrin. There is little doubt therefore that to the eastern emirs, Mahdism was subversive and dangerous. While the Caliph and his emirs opposed Mahdism, a large body of people, scholars and their students rallied to it. It was this that gave the movement "enough adherents to set at naught the disapprobation of the Caliph and his emirs" and enabled it to defy "the striking power of the combined emirates of the east for about fifteen years".<sup>71</sup> The authorities in the Caliphate did not eliminate Mahdism; it survived and became a serious menace to the colonial administration at the beginning of the present century.

Even though there were serious internal problems in the Sokoto Caliphate throughout the 19th century, one should not assume that the Caliph and the emirs spent most of their time checking rebellions and dealing with recalcitrant ethnic groups. The dynastic conflicts, disputes within and between the emirates and the threats posed by the Mahdist, undoubtedly, threatened the cohesion of the Caliphate, but this was not to the extent of weakening the operation of the emirate system and preventing deve-

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., pp. 306-8.

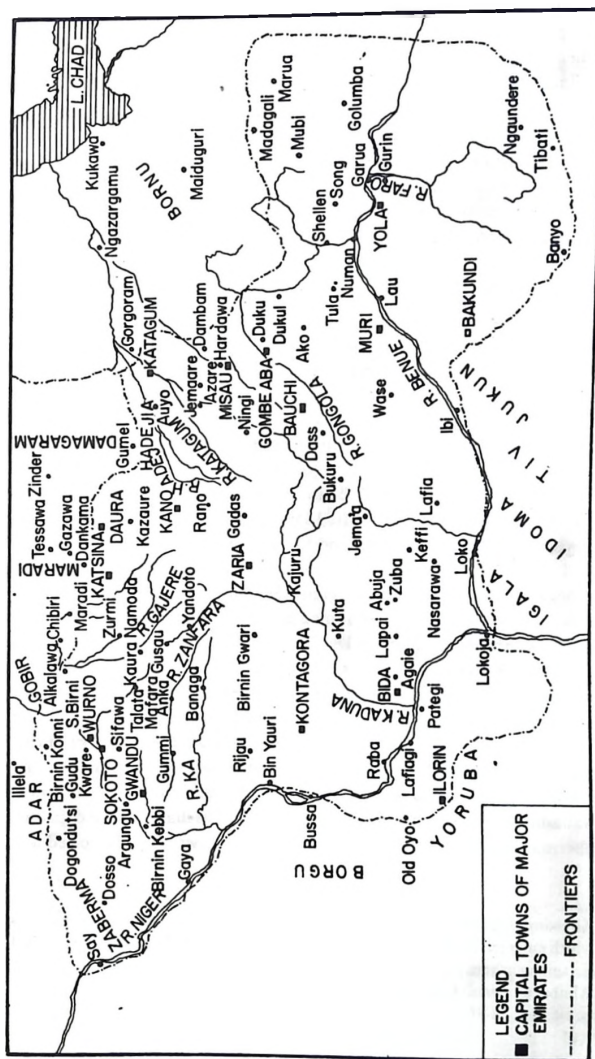
68. S.J. Hogben & A.H.M. Kirk-Greene; *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria* (London 1966) p. 479.

69. J.E. Lavers, "A Preliminary Account of the career of a Mahdist leader in North East Nigeria" (*Research Bulletin*, Centre for Arabic Documentation, Inst. of African Studies, Ibadan, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1967) pp. 16-38.

70. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

71. Adeleye, op. cit., p. 109.





The Sokoto Caliphate: external frontiers

developments in political and economic fields. Politically, the newly established emirates in areas where, hitherto, there had not existed centralized polities made great advances. As the 19th century progressed, the governments became elaborate and the territories they controlled expanded. Such was the case in respect of Bauchi, Gombe, Fombina and Muri. Similarly, there were great advances in other fields. The capitals of the emirates, especially those to the east of Hausaland, developed as big urban centres peopled by mixed groups, Hausa, Kanuri and Fulbe.<sup>72</sup> The establishment of the Caliphate well beyond the frontiers of Hausaland under governments which recognized a common head and operated one law, the shari'a, widened the scope of the commercial activities of the Hausa.<sup>73</sup> It also boosted long-distance trade and increased contacts between different communities through inter-locking trade.

### External Relations and Threats

Relations between the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate and their neighbours were marked by wars and conflicts. In the wake of the jihad, some of the ruling elite of the Hausa states fled with their supporters and sympathizers. Eventually, they established new camps which developed as centres of resistance and struggle not only against attempts by the emirs to bring them under control but also in order to regain control of their lost domains. In the northern and western frontiers, Gobir based at Tsibiri, Katsina at Maradi, Daura centred at Zango and Baure, were the main threats to the Caliphate. The Caliph Muhammad Bello, by establishing *ribats* on the frontiers, achieved some measure of security.<sup>74</sup> In 1836, the military superiority of Sokoto was vindicated when, at Gawakuke, Gobir and Maradi were jointly humiliated.<sup>75</sup>

With the foundation of Tsibiri as its new base in c. 1843 Gobir recovered from its defeat and began a series of offensives against Sokoto and the emirate of Katsina. But the Maradawa were defeated by a combined Sokoto and Katsina force at the battle of Dan Taura.<sup>76</sup> In the same year, c. 1844, Dan Mari of Mardi, leading his forces through the Dajin Rubu to Matazu, threatened Kano. But his army was dislodged after a campaign lasting about one year.<sup>77</sup> In c. 1847 a joint expedition from Gobir and Maradi, assisted by Saddik, the deposed Emir of Katsina, defeated the army of the Caliph. The Caliphate was also threatened from the west. Its boundary in that region was generally undefined. The petty principalities which emerged following the collapse of Kebbi formed parts of the Gwandu emirates.<sup>78</sup> But with the emergence of Yakubu Nabame in 1849, the quiescent Kebbi with its half subdued principalities, Arewa, Zaberma, Dendi, parts of Gurma and Liptako, awoke and revolted against the Caliphate.<sup>79</sup>

72. Saleh Abubakar is currently studying the urban phenomena in the Sokoto Caliphate. New towns which emerged in the 19th century include Bauchi, Gombe-Abba, Yola, Muri, Jalingo and Bida among others.

73. See S. Abubakar, *Lamibe*, pp. 229-240.

74. Last, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-80.

75. *Ibid.* p. 81.

76. Gowers, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

78. Balogun, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

79. Alkali, M.B. *op. cit.*, pp. 230-39.

With the support of Zabarma led by Dauda, Nabame opened hostilities against the Caliphate with an attack on Silame and before long Kebbi regained control of some of its lost settlements such as Ambursa, Gungu and Gulumbi.<sup>80</sup> Struggle against Sokoto and Gwandu continued after the death of Nabame. Sarki Kebbi Mainasara for example had, in 1856, destroyed Tamkala, thereby gaining independence for Arewa, Zaberna and Dēndi.<sup>81</sup> But in 1859 Mainasara lost his life in war against Gwandu. Kebbi's retaliation the following year resulted in a serious defeat of Gwandu and the death of its emir Haliru at Karakara.<sup>82</sup> After that hostility between Kebbi and the Caliphate abated, and in 1867 a compact which guaranteed independence to the former was signed.<sup>83</sup> But it lasted only for seven years.<sup>84</sup> Even though the 1867 peace treaty was broken, Kebbi maintained its independence and the authorities of the Caliphate had to reconcile themselves with that fact.

The second half of the 19th century also witnessed further conflicts with Maradi and Gobir. In 1854, for example, Gobir advanced into Sokoto territory and threatened Wurno.<sup>85</sup> Maradi, on the other hand, intensified its activities against Katsina and Kano. The indomitable Dan Baskore, c. 1851-73 advanced towards Katsina after forcing its Emir, Muhammad Bello, to flee at Kabakawa.<sup>86</sup> In another expedition, he penetrated well into Katsina territory down to Karaye and reached as far as Kudang in Zaria emirate. Maradi, undoubtedly, was a big threat to the Hausa emirates and its traditions of hostility continued after the death of Dan Baskore in 1873. His son, Barmu, c. 1873-78, had at one time overrun Kano's northern territory and settled in the vicinity of Bichi. He also advanced to Fatika in the emirate of Zaria before he retired. This feat was repeated by Mazawaje when he advanced into Kano to as far as Kiru in the 1880s. But towards the end of the 19th century, Maradi was weakened by internal wranglings. Divided into two factions, one at Tasawa and the other in Maradi, its military effectiveness declined and in the 1890s a Katsina army led by Muhammadu Kankiyar Ruma, the famous Dan Waire, routed the combined forces of Gobir and Maradi at Chikaji.<sup>87</sup>

For most of the 19th century, relations between the Caliphate and its north-east and eastern neighbours were hostile. The hostility with Borno dates back to the Felata rebellion and their subsequent attempts to overthrow the Mai's government in Gazargamo. However, the emergence of al-Kanemi not only checked the Felata menace

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80. Ibid.

81. Ibid. p. 252.

82. Ibid. p. 263.

83. This is the famous '*barni in barka*' (leave me and I leave you), concluded by Abdullahi Toga, see Ibid., p. 267.

84. In 1874 war broke out with Gwandu over a border town, Giru and in 1875 Abdullahi Toga of Kebbi attacked Ambursa in Gwandu emirate, see *ibid.*, pp. 271ff.

85. Barth, *op. cit.*, Vol. V. p. 337.

86. For further insight into the history of Maradi see P. David, "Maradi, l'ancien Etat et l'ancienne ville; site, population, histoire" (B.IFAN, Niamey, 1965) and "Maradi Precolonial: l'Etat et la ville" (B.IFAN, Dakar 1969), pp. 638-88.

87. See Yusuf Bala Usman Katina, "The Transformation of Katsina", Ph.D. Ahmadu Bello University 1974.

within metropolitan Borno, but was followed by determined efforts to regain control of the western dependencies where the emirates of Hadejia and Katagum had been established. In 1824 Borno launched an unsuccessful attack upon Hadejia, but in the following year, Katagum was devastated and its Emir Dan Kawu was driven off.<sup>88</sup> Encouraged by this victory, al-Kanemi pushed westwards and threatened the emirate of Kano in 1826.<sup>89</sup> Unable to check the advance of the powerful army, Ibrahim Dabo of Kano appealed to the Caliph Muhammad Bello who in turn asked the Emir Yakubu of Bauchi to intervene. The latter, leading his army in a brilliant campaign, routed the Borno forces at Fake.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the first most serious threat to the Sokoto Caliphate was checked.

Borno's campaigns in the west after 1826 were, by and large, unsuccessful. The Felata not only held to their grounds but succeeded in founding two new emirates, Misau and Jama'are in 1831 and 1835 respectively.<sup>91</sup> Since that period, the frontier between Borno and the Caliphate in the west remained more or less stable. But raids and counter-raids between the two powers continued for over a decade after the death of al-Kanemi. Early in his reign, the Shehu Umar launched several campaigns against Jama'are, Misau and Katagum on the western border but no new grounds were gained.<sup>92</sup> The Emir Sambo of Hadejia also raided through Bedde to Damaturu but was driven off. That Borno was no longer a serious threat to the Sokoto Caliphate is evident by its improved relations at the time of the Caliph Ali b. Bello.<sup>93</sup> But new tension developed following Shehu Umar's support of Buhari during his rebellion against Sokoto.<sup>94</sup> In fact, Borno's grant of military assistance helped to exacerbate the rebellion.

There is no doubt at all that relations between Borno and Sokoto had deteriorated in the 1850s. When the Galadima Umar of Borno quarrelled with the Shehu in c. 1849 he fled to Sokoto in the hope of obtaining military assistance to establish his own domain.<sup>95</sup> Shehu Umar's support of Buhari not only increased the tempo of border hostilities with the neighbouring emirates, but also resulted in a general alarm and fear of a possible military attack from Borno. Indeed, pressure against Fombina increased. In c. 1849, for example, Ramadhan, a leading Borno military official, led a predatory expedition against Uba within the emirate of Fombina.<sup>96</sup> In the following

88. Brenner, *op. cit.*, p. 55. al-Kanemi's aim was "to secure the Western frontiers of Borno and impose his authority".

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58, it is indicated that "al-Kanemi had no intention of attacking Sokoto or even Kano". He advanced westwards just to punish Muhammad Manga who had been raiding into Borno from Deya 'carrying away cattle, property and captives to be sold into slavery'.

90. *Ibid.*, 57.

91. Brenner, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

92. Gowers, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

93. *Ibid.* Borno was faced with the problems of Zinder which absorbed its attention.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

95. A.K. Benisheik, 'The Galadimas of Borno: a preliminary survey of their role under the Kanemi Shehus', *Borno Seminar Papers*, Ahmadu Bello University, 1973.

96. Barth, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 183ff.

year, Kachalla Ali Dandal, the governor of the south, ransacked and completely destroyed the towns of Kopa and Kobchi.<sup>97</sup> The aim of Shehu Umar, it appears, was to regain control of the fertile territory in the south where various Fulbe groups established sub-emirates under Yola.

In 1851 emissaries from Kukawa accompanied Dr Barth to Yola with letters which claimed for Borno the towns of Kopa and Kobchi.<sup>98</sup> The indignant Lamido, Muhammad Lawal, deported the emissaries and refused permission for Dr Barth to travel within the emirate. He also made it clear that he was prepared to go ahead with the policy of attacking Borno's border towns if Shehu so wished. According to Dr Barth, Borno in the 1850s had entertained no fear of an invasion from Fombina because the Lamido was more absorbed with the affairs of his emirate.<sup>99</sup> However, even though Muhammad Lawal was faced with problems, he had never relented in his efforts to protect the frontiers of his emirate. In the 1860s, while Yerima Ali led an expedition to the north, the Lamido himself advanced to the northwest, probably in an effort to check the Borno border raids.<sup>100</sup>

While in the 1850s Yola feared an invasion from the north, in reality, Borno was not in a position to send an expedition all the way to the Benue valley, over three hundred miles away. Its government was seriously weakened by the Abdurrahman affair and towards the end of his reign, Shehu Umar "relented in the Bornu traditional bellicosity towards the Sokoto Caliphate".<sup>101</sup> Thus, in c. 1879 when Yerima Bukar threatened Misau he was recalled by the Shehu. Similarly, after border clashes between Borno and Katagum, a boundary agreement was successfully arranged and recommended to the Caliph Muazu in Sokoto.<sup>102</sup> After the death of the Shehu Umar in 1881, Borno was bedevilled by dynastic conflicts which further weakened the government and for over a decade Borno presented no problem or threat to the Sokoto Caliphate.

The other eastern and northeastern neighbours of the Caliphate, Mandara and Damagaram, were also troublesome. Since Modibbo Adama's successful expedition against Mandara in the 1830s relations had not improved considerably. The sultans of Mandara had never fully accepted the establishment of the Fombina sub-emirates of Morua, Medif, Bago and Madagali in the Gazawa plains and the Yedseram basin. These, as well as the region to as far south as Mayo Luwe, where the sub-emirates of Guider, Bibemi, Mayo-luwe and parts of Rai-Buba were carved out, fell within the sphere of Mandara influence. Its rulers worked towards regaining control of these areas from the Fulbe and so relations were marked by raids and counter-raids throughout the 19th century.<sup>103</sup>

While Mandara pressed hard on Fombina, Damagaram was very active against its neighbours, Katsina, Daura and Kano. The early activities of the Mai Ibrahim b.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid. See also S. Abubakar "A Preliminary Examination of Relations between Borno and Fombina to 1901", *Borno Seminar Papers*, ABU, 1973.

99. Barth, op. cit., p. 464.

100. Ibid.

101. Adeleye, op. cit., p. 71.

102. Ibid. Shehu Umar promised he would not break the treaty.

103. Abubakar, op. cit.



Sulaiman were continued by his brother, Taminu in the period 1851-84. The Damagaram forces armed with local gunpowder and imported fire-arms were much more effective than those of Kano and Hadejia. But in the 1890s Damagaram lost its military superiority. During the *basasa* in Kano, Damagaram which sided with Tukurawa was defeated by Ali.<sup>104</sup> Again in 1898 Aliyu of Kano recorded a second victory against Damagaram.<sup>105</sup> After that, its pressure upon Kano declined.

The southern and southeastern frontiers of the Sokoto Caliphate saw continued expansion throughout the 19th century. Thus, Nupe Ilorin and Fombina can be described as 'frontier emirates'. Nupe, and Fombina in particular, bordered petty ethnic groups whose political and military organization were in no position to put up stiff resistance to conquest. In respect of Nupe, all the northeastern Yoruba were easy prey for its cavalry. In Fombina on the other hand, expansion southwards began in the 1830s and by mid-century sub-emirates such as Tinger, Banyo, Tibati and Ngaundere were established.<sup>106</sup> Further expansion took place during the second half of the 19th century. Ngaundere under very energetic chiefs by c. 1860 had captured Yambaka and a decade later, its domain extended to the region that separates the basins of the Shari and the Sanaga. Before the turn of the century, the southeastern border of Fombina reached Gaza beyond the river Kadei. Similarly, Banyo and Tibati pushed their southern frontiers at the expense of the Bamoun. In fact, the latter's raids are reputed to have reached the coast.<sup>107</sup> But its effective rule had not extended beyond the Mbam, Sanaga and Djerem rivers.

In the southwest, the collapse of the Oyo empires created a power vacuum in northern Yorubaland. The consequent disunity, rivalry and intrigues between the various chiefs in the area provided an opportunity for the expansion of Ilorin emirate. By about 1840, the Emir Abdulsalam had gained control of Old Oyo and a number of other towns in Igbominaland.<sup>108</sup> But his attempts to gain territory in Ijesaland were unsuccessful because of the wooded nature of the region. Thus, the thick equatorial forest was a big impediment to the southward expansion of Ilorin. Moreover the immigrants in the south had, at Osogbo in 1842, defeated Ilorin and so halted its advance to the south.<sup>109</sup> However, Ilorin turned its attention to the east and south-east where, by c. 1860, the Emir Shitta had subjugated Ikole, Awtun and Erinmope.<sup>110</sup> The raids of his successor, Aliyu b. Shitta, reached as far as Igbirraland.

The Sokoto Caliphate had also a number of 'internal neighbours' which had been threatening some of the emirates. The largest block of territory within the perimeter of the Caliphate was Gwariland which separated the Hausa from the southern emirates. But during the second half of the 19th century, the activities of Nagwamatse, which resulted in the foundation of Kontagora, greatly reduced the size of the Gwari territory independent of Sokoto.<sup>111</sup> In east Gwariland, Abuja, founded by the fugitive Sarkin

104. Last, op. cit., p. 136n.

105. Gowers, op. cit., p. 14.

106. Abubakar, op. cit., pp. 153-66.

107. Barth, op. cit. p. 498ff.

108. Ahmed Abubakar, *History of Ilorin*, NHRS Arabic collections, Ahmadu Bello University.

109. Adeleye, op. cit., p. 72.

110. Ibid.

111. Duff, op. cit., pp. 33-6.

Zazzau Muhammadu Makau, maintained its independence and continued to cause trouble to the Sokoto Caliphate. In c. 1825 Makau was killed in war against the small emirate of Lapai and in c. 1851 Umaru Makama Dogo of Nasarawa inflicted a severe defeat on Abuja.<sup>112</sup> These reverses did not deter Abuja from its anti-Fulbe activities. In c. 1877, for example, Ibrahim of Abuja repulsed an incursion from Kontagora and in the following year, he sent his forces against Nasarawa which invaded the town of Toto.<sup>113</sup> Finally in 1893, Abuja recorded a spectacular victory against Zaria at the battle of Farin Ruwa.<sup>114</sup>

Gumel and Ningi had also been very troublesome to the Sokoto Caliphate. The accession of Muhammadu Dan Tanoma in c. 1828 in Gumel marked the beginning of wars with Hadejia which lasted to c. 1872. In that year, the Emir Haru defeated Gumel at the battle of Zabram.<sup>115</sup> Faced with new threats from Damagaram and later Borno, following the advent of Rabih, Gumel ceased being a threat to Hadejia. Of all the internal neighbours of the Caliphate Ningi had posed the most serious threats.<sup>116</sup> A town founded by dissident scholars under the leadership of Hamza from Yar Tsakuwa in Kano emirate, Ningi became a thorn in the side of Bauchi, Misau, Jama'are, Katagum and Kano emirates. The Emir Usman of Kano was constantly at war against Ningi, but his successor, Abdullah 1855-83, relaxed that policy. Consequently, the Ningawa "devised admirable defences, and had learnt a good deal about organisation for defence".<sup>117</sup> It is small wonder therefore that Ningi not only stood its grounds but became more and more aggressive towards its neighbours, especially Kano. During the civil war in Kano, Ningi sent a powerful contingent to assist the rebels.

The emirate of Zaria had also come within the orbit of Ningi's threat. In the 1880s, Galadima Sulaiman plotted with Haruna of Ningi against the Emir Sambo of Zaria. The plan was for Ningi to invade Zaria and attack the Emir on his way to Sokoto so that the Galadima could usurp the Emirship.<sup>118</sup> Even though Haruna's reply to the Galadima fell into the Emir's hand, Ningi invaded Zaria and spread devastation right down to the city gates. Ningi raids increased in regularity and intensity by 1890 when the Emir Sambo was deposed for inability to defend his emirate; Zaria's towns such as Kacia, Soba and Makarfi, had, at various times, been destroyed by Ningi.<sup>119</sup>

Ningi however threatened its immediate neighbours more than it threatened Zaria. Conflicts with Bauchi, Jama'are, Katagum and Hadejia, were the main feature of political relations in the region. Because of constant raids, the Emir Ibrahim of Bauchi, 1845-77, founded a ribat, Kafin Madaki, twenty-eight miles north of the capital, for protection against the Ningawa.<sup>120</sup> The emirate of Jama'are, because of

112. Hassan & Shua'ibu, *Chronicle of Abuja*, Ibadan 1952.

113. East *Labaran Hausawa*, i, pp.

114. Smith, *op. cit.*, p.

115. Gowers, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.

116. See East, *op. cit.*, pp. 51ff.

117. Gowers, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

118. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-4.

119. *Ibid.*

120. S.J. Hogben and A.H.M. Kirk-Greene *op. cit.*, pp. 228-29.

its size, was an easy prey to Ningi, especially in the period 1862-86. Various moves, including joint expeditions with Katagum and Hadejia, failed to check Ningi aggression.<sup>121</sup> In 1884, for example, Haruna repulsed a combined expedition by the eastern emirs. The Sokoto Caliphate had failed to deal militarily with Ningi and so, on the recommendation of the Emir of Kano, the Caliph Mua'zu concluded a treaty of friendship, which, for some time, restrained "the tyrant of the hills".<sup>122</sup>

The last decade of the 19th century witnessed the emergence of a much more serious threat to the Caliphate from the east. The conquest of Borno by Rabih and his subsequent alliance with Hayat, the Mahdist leader, were viewed with apprehension throughout the Caliphate, but more especially by the eastern emirates. Thus, from 1893 the fear that Rabih might lead an expedition against them was uppermost in the minds of the emirs in the east. By 1895, while one rumour indicated that Rabih would attempt to establish a foothold on the Benue, another had it that he intended to march on Kano.<sup>123</sup> Panic and general commotion set in throughout the emirates neighbouring Borno. Greater panic and confusion in Misau, Katagum and Hadejia followed the sack of Bedde by Rabih's forces in 1896.<sup>124</sup> But instead of resorting to military preparations, the threatened emirates resorted to prayers since it was generally believed that they could not face the powerful Rabih in battle. However, even if Rabih had contemplated an advance against the Sokoto Caliphate, he was forced to abandon it in order to meet the French threat to his position.<sup>125</sup> This news was received with overt relief in the capitals of the eastern emirates. Later in the same year, Rabih's emissaries were received in Sokoto by the Caliph Abdurrahman.<sup>127</sup> Certainly, this would not have been possible if hostility between Borno under Rabih and the Sokoto Caliphate had not abated. The danger from Rabih finally passed away in 1900 when Rabih himself was killed by the French.

## Conclusion

Throughout its period of existence, the Sokoto Caliphate was never free from one internal problem or the other. The Caliph and the emirs under him faced serious internal crises and external threats and these tended at times to undermine the normal functioning of government. However, the various problems did not get worse as the 19th century wore on and the Caliph in Sokoto did not face more threats at the end of the 19th century than he did at the beginning. One would not therefore justifiably talk of the authority of the Caliph declining gradually in the course of the century. On the contrary, since most of the problems confronting the Caliphate, apart from the encroachment of European powers which is outside the scope of this chapter, were overcome by the late 1890s, one can argue that the authority of the Caliph was at its

121. *Ibid.*, p. 461.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 493.

123. Caliph Umar to the Emir Usman of Zuchi (Bauchi letter, Arewa House Arabic collections, Kaduna).

124. Adeleye, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

126. *Ibid.* pp. 192-94.

127. Adeleye, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

peak by 1900. The Buhari rebellion ended in 1863, the *basasa* in Kano was amicably resolved by 1895 and the threats from Rabih and Mahdism had cooled by 1897.

Similarly, far from disintegrating, the Caliphate was structurally as intact in 1900 as it could possibly have been. The problems emanating from 'internal neighbours' had de-escalated before the end of the 19th century. In the late 1880s the gravity of Ningi's threat was reduced as a result of a treaty of peace with the Caliph Muazu. The Emir Aliyu of Kano had defeated Damagaram in c. 1898 and Katsina recorded a remarkable victory against Maradi during the same period. In the west, Gobir was not much of a threat and Kebbi, though independent, was merely a nuisance to Gwandu and Sokoto. In the south, Ilorin and the Nupe had recovered from the military defeat by the Royal Niger Company and the control of the emirs, though shaken, was fully restored over the affairs of emirates.

As Professor Abdullahi Smith rightly points out, the history of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century "is one of a continuous struggle through many vicissitudes".<sup>128</sup> No doubt, this was partly because of the inherent problems in establishing a centralized political authority over diverse people who had not been accustomed to such. Even so, one can argue that the idea of one Caliph was more firmly accepted at the end of the 19th century than it was at the beginning. The first emirs were appointed by the Shehu and the majority of them depended on this authority for their acceptability to their *jama'a*. Thus, the subsequent dependence upon the Caliph to give legal validity to the appointment of emirs "laid a firm foundation of loyalty to Sokoto" and down to the end of the 19th century all the emirates looked up to it for intellectual, religious and political leadership.

Other factors also helped to bind the emirates together under the leadership of Sokoto. The first is the universal respect to the memory of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio. The flag bearers who subsequently became emirs were either personally known to the Shehu or had been his students. Thus, for the latter, he represented their own ideals and aspirations. Similarly, the first emirs were members of the *Qadiriyya* of which the Shehu himself was leader. By virtue of the possession of the *Qadiriyya wird*, to which is attributed beneficent (*karamat*,) he is believed to have possessed supernatural powers. Thus, the Shehu was widely respected and his eminent position in the brotherhood helped to boost the prestige of his descendants, especially the Caliphs. He became a legendary figure and the respect to his memory accounted for the continued loyalty of the emirates to Sokoto throughout the 19th century.

The intellectual reputation of the jihad leaders also served to bind the emirates together. The works of the triumvirate, the Shehu, Abdullahi and Muhammadu Bello, formed the main courses for constitution and law throughout the Caliphate. Since the bedrock of the Caliphate system was Islam, those better learned in it deserved the respect and support of all. The Caliph also found within Islam the vital means to keep the emirs within the fold. The Koran and *sunna* were, from time to time, employed to remind the emirs of their duties and the need for loyalty to

128. Abdullahi Smith, "Review Article: H.A.S. Johnson, *The Fulani Empire of Sokoto*", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. 4, No. 4, June 1969, p. 619.

constituted authority.<sup>129</sup> Finally, there was a general awareness that the Caliph and his emirs were merely to enforce the shari'a. God was the ultimate source of all authority and all powers were exercised on his behalf. The Caliph was not therefore a sovereign and the Caliphate was not an empire. Thus, the main functions of the former and his emirs were mainly to implement Islamic policy and there should be no conflict if each adhered to his defined responsibilities.

In regard to the spread of Islam and the socio-economic changes in the established Caliphate in the 19th century, the information available is such that only tentative speculations can be made at this stage. There is, however, no denying the fact that the establishment of the Caliphate with emirates under Muslims, the emergence of towns with substantial cosmopolitan populations under the control of Muslim emirs had helped to spread Islam. As more and more non-Muslims came into peaceful contacts with Muslims from the emirates, especially through trade, Islam was better understood and eventually embraced. In most emirates scholars, who moved about and enlightened the public on their duties and obligations, were patronized by the emirs. In some other emirates, such as Ilorin, even though territorial expansion was halted, religious and cultural expansion continued down to the end of the 19th century.

Socially, the Fulbe, who had been closely associated with the jihad, settled in towns as officials of the emirates and as soldiers. They abandoned their nomadic habits and through intermarriage and copious concubinage they lost their Fulbe-ism. By the end of the 19th century the Fulbe political elite in most emirates was absorbed into the dominant culture group among whom they lived. But in Gombe, Fombina and Muri the absence of a dominant group gave the Fulbe cultural ascendancy. As regards the economy all emirs gave full support to the development of trade, not only for the sake of revenue but also in keeping with their obligations. Thus, one consequence of this, especially in the emirates outside Hausaland, is the emergence of Hausa settlements, trading colonies and communities. In Fombina, for example, the Hausa and Kanuri dominated the trade in ivory and slaves while the Kombi engaged in kola trade from the coast to the Chad basin.

In so far as politics and government were concerned, the triumvirate had, in many of their works, condemned the practices of the Habe governments. Among other things, they pointed out that governments were run not in accordance with Islam, succession to offices was not based on qualification but on birth, the ruling elite lived in an ostentatious fashion in big palaces filled with women and many of their measures were exacting, unjust and based on worldly desires. Undoubtedly, the leaders of the jihad, dissatisfied with the state of affairs in Hausaland, envisaged the emergence of new governments. Thus, a study of the established Caliphate is incomplete without an examination of the evolution of the system of government which emerged as from 1808.<sup>130</sup>

129. See letter to Modibbo Adama in Abubakar, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-90. The Caliph Muhammad Bello raised a number of questions relating to the obligations of emirs, the fourth being the need for loyalty and he quotes the tradition, "He who withdraws his hand from obedience will meet God on the day of judgement without excuse" and also "he who dies without the yoke of allegiance on his neck dies the death of ignorance".

130. See S. Abubakar, "The Emirate-type of government in the Sokoto Caliphate", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 7, No. 2, June 1974.



It is common knowledge that the Shehu Usman had advised his commanders not to use the title of kings and their officials. No doubt, the implication was that the emirs should not copy or adopt the system of government operating in Hausaland of the time.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, while Abdullahi Dan Fodio wrote political tracts to guide some of the new emirs faced with the problems of forming governments, Muhammad Bello concentrated on writing directives to specific emirs outlining their duties and responsibilities and on how best to carry them out. But it was the Shehu, Usman who was more specific when in his *Kitah al-Farq*, he recommended the appointment of specific government functionaries, such as *vizier*, *Qadi*, *wali al-shurta*, *muhtasib* and *sa'i*. In their first decade of existence the emirate governments in Hausaland were patterned on the Shehu's recommendations. Similarly, in the emirates which emerged outside Hausaland pre-existing political systems were generally ignored. But in the course of the 19th century the nature of the early emirate governments changed as more and more of the pre-existing institutions were revived and adopted. Thus, by the end of the 19th century, the emirate governments reflected, to some extent in their pattern and practices, those they had replaced.

After the jihad the emirs faced problems of integrating diverse peoples over wide areas. The new governments were simple, and "they sought to win the respect and support of the people through religion; through fear of God and not by the apparent show of power".<sup>132</sup> But the attempts to use Islam as the basic ideology for a wider unity failed. The society in Hausa was not scholaristically oriented and not all the Hausa people were Muslims. In fact, even among the Muslims only very few were seriously imbued with Islamic ideals. Out of the classified ten groups of supporters listed by Muhammad Bello, only one was fully committed to the ideals of the reform movement. Moreover, the disastrous battle at Tsuntsua in 1805 had depleted the number of Muslim intellectuals who, certainly, would have occupied important political offices. Subsequently, the Caliph, Muhammad Bello, had to rely on nomadic Fulbe leaders and he also allowed a number of defunct Hausa titles to re-surface. Similarly, the emirs in the Caliphate revived pre-existing titles of their localities except in respect of the eastern emirates where Hausa ones were borrowed and in Fombina where not only the Hausa but Kanuri titles were imported as well.

The adoption of the Hausa, Kanuri and other pre-existing political systems was, to a large extent, inevitable. The exigencies of a large and heterogeneous political organization, the problems of political integration, the need for security against internal and external threats, the desire to reward faithful servants and to conciliate ambitious subordinates called for an elaborate system. Thus, as more and more people, clients and slaves, joined the government they were designated in the Hausa fashion. This became all the more so since the Fulbe's political system was not at all elaborate and so there was no question of its adoption. Moreover, to find suitable Arabic names for offices such as Madawaki, Galadima, Wambai and others would have been too confusing to a society that knew no Arabic.

131. But in a later work, *Najm-ul-ikhsan* (NHRS, Arabic collection) the Shehu was not opposed to the use of Hausa political titles "so long as the functions attached to them were based on strictly Islamic principles".

132. Abdullahi Smith, op. cit., p. 618.

Even though the Hausa governments were condemned as oppressive and corrupt, they had not been charged with inefficiency. The Hausa institutions had been operative for centuries and people had become used to them. A ruler should be surrounded with pomp and pageantry so as to instil fear and evoke respect. The resources of the land should be centred around him and these could be disbursed to maintain the loyalty of subordinates. The prestige of a ruler was to some extent determined by the number of his concubines, courtiers and palace musicians. These and many other practices were discarded by the early emirs, but the latter generation of rulers, insufficiently educated and born when their parents were in power, went back to them. They were attracted more by the tales about the pre-jihad society and rulers, and being less intellectual, they gradually re-introduced the old practices. In Kano, for example, the unwillingness of Sulaiman to enter the Gidan Rumfa was seen as a weakness and this affected his prestige. Similarly, the prestige of a number of emirs was affected by the absence of courtiers and musicians praising and highlighting their achievements. In short, the simplicity of the first emirs and their poverty evoked contempt and cynical comments rather than admiration. Such and similar attitudes from the populace induced the subsequent generation of emirs to greatly compromise the postulations of predecessors on several aspects of government.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the system of government that emerged and operated throughout the 19th century represents "the logical adaptation of political structure to conditions which the revolution was never able to change". Moreover, the fact that Hausa institutions of government were revived did not make the emirate governments unislamic. While the old Hausa rulers neglected Islam in the operation of governments, the emirs, down to the end of the 19th century, were guided by the shari'a and the injunctions of the Koran. The other main difference between the Hausa states and the Caliphate is that the latter embodied the notion of law, that is, of a judiciary separate from the executive. Also division in society was along religious rather than ethnic lines. Above all, Islam, rather than force, was the basis for authority.

## BORNO IN THE 19TH CENTURY

SA'AD ABUBAKAR

Without doubt, the Kanuri empire of Borno was one of the most powerful polities to have emerged in pre-colonial Nigeria. This famous and very remarkable empire right from its foundation, underwent several political transformations under the leadership of the Sefuwa, one of the longest dynasties in Africa. The kingdom also witnessed sensational developments, the most far-reaching of which took place in the 19th century. This chapter is therefore concerned with the events which began shortly after the outbreak of the jihad in Gobir and ended with the French defeat of Rabih in 1900.

**Crack in the Edifice**

The developments in 19th century Borno cannot be understood without a preview of the events in the preceding century. The problems which faced the kingdom at the beginning of that century were military. The superiority of the Kanuri in previous centuries was largely due to their military capabilities. The Borno army right from the 15th century was composed of two major units, the professional and the amateur. The former comprising slaves and princes under the leadership of the *Kaigama* functioned as a standing army. Based in the capital to be watched and supervised, it protected the office of Mai, enforced his orders and undertook all punitive expeditions. The amateur wing on the other hand, comprised levies from dependencies and citizens from all works of life conscripted on an *ad hoc* basis. Forming the bulk of the army, it was used for major defensive and offensive military undertakings. However, unlike the professionals, the amateurs required regular training in the art of warfare and this was usually provided through periodic mock raids organized and led by the Mai in person. Thus, the people of Borno could be mobilized at any time for military engagements. But in the reign of the Mai Ali b. Hajj Hamdun things began to deteriorate and Borno eventually found itself in serious troubles. Not only was the system of regular training for amateurs abandoned, he also used the professionals only once during his long reign. Consequently, Borno lost its military efficacy as testified by the serious defeat inflicted upon it by the Mandara army in c. 1891.<sup>1</sup>

1. H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, Vol. 2, London, 1857, p. 599.  
H.R. Palmer, *The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan*, London, 1936, p. 255. Borno's defeat was in fact a humiliation because Mandara had for long been its vassal.

There is little doubt that even before the end of the 18th century the once dreaded Borno army became a shadow of its former self and this had serious political and economic consequences. The 18th century was marked by periodic famine which created a serious food problem in the metropolis.<sup>2</sup> The flow of the River Yo was irregular and its valley was not suitable for agriculture. The population of the capital and its immediate surroundings therefore depended upon the provinces for the supply of foodstuff. The ruling élite for example looked to tribute from dependencies, especially from the south, the fertile yedseram basin and the Margi country in general. Hitherto, the Mai with a very powerful army had exercised very effective control over dependencies and ensured the regular flow of tribute into the capital. But with military decline, the dependencies, no longer afraid of punitive expeditions, relented in the despatch of tribute to the capital and this created further difficulties for the government.

The minorities were also troublesome from the last decades of the 18th century. The major groups were the Felata, Shua Arabs and the Tuaregs.<sup>3</sup> The first group, for example, had been living for centuries in the western and southern dependencies. By the 18th century, they were joined by the Shua Arabs who, like the Felata, were nomadic and cattle rearing. All the three groups were at the periphery of power in the empire. The Borno government, like those of the Hausa states, was solidified and ultraconservative. Not only was it large and inefficient but by the 18th century upward mobility—i.e., entry of common men into the ruling élite—was very difficult except through enslavement and subsequent assimilation. But because of the nature of their societies the minorities lived as separate communities with their own leaders, outside the power structure of the empire. The Felata and Shua Arabs were however very important to the economic life of the empire since revenue was realized through cattle tax and the various local authorities received grazing dues from the different nomadic groups. The fact that positions in the Borno government were not open to the minorities was not because they lacked qualified people. The Felata community, for example, boasted of highly learned scholars, and experienced nomadic leaders. While the latter were generally accorded the status of *Cima Jilibe* (leaders of their groups) as tax agents, the former, on the other hand, were feared and suspected. The famous Felata scholar, Muhammad Tahir, for example, was a friend of the Mai Ali but he was eventually ostracized from the court obviously because his teaching and works were regarded as subversive.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Felata not properly represented in the Borno government in spite of their scholastic achievements and contributions to the economy felt oppressed and exploited. Moreover, during the last decade of the 18th century, the imperial government, weakened by military decline failed to provide the

2. Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-54. The 18th century opened with the "great famine" which lasted seven years and was followed by the 'Ali Shu' which lasted for two years (between 1731-47 and there was the famine during the reign of Mai Dunama Gana (1747-50).
3. The Tuaregs had for long been very troublesome to the Sefuwa rulers of Borno; see Barth, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 51 and Palmer in *ibid.*, p. 234ff.
4. T. Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives*, 2nd edition, London 1975, p. 209; A.D.H. Bivar, & M. Hiskett "The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: a provisional account", (BSOAS, Vol. XXV, No. 1, 1962, pp. 138-39.

necessary protection to the nomads in the provinces. Consequently, they became indifferent to the authorities in Gazargamo.

The Tuaregs, located mainly in the northwest, had always been very menacing to the Borno government. Their pressure increased following the weakening of control over dependencies. The Shau Arabs and the Felata fomented trouble in the west and south, and during the Borno expedition to Mandara the support of the nomadic Tuaregs contributed immensely to the latter's victory. In 1800 the Tuaregs also recorded another victory against Borno when they destroyed its dependency of Gaskeru.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the empire of the Mais entered the 19th century not only in a very much weakened position socially, economically and politically but also facing serious internal and external threats.

### The Felata Rebellion

Borno must have breathed a sign of relief when the long reign of the Mai Ali came to an end in 1793. But his son and successor Ahmad was quite old and weak. It is therefore not surprising that he made no real effort to solve the numerous problems confronting the empire. Borno's relations with its erstwhile dependencies deteriorated. After overthrowing the overlordship of the Mai, Bagarmi for example began to threaten other areas under the latter's authority. Similarly, Wadai further east continued its westward expansion thereby setting in motion a series of migration by various elements of Teda, Kanembu and Shua Arabs into Kanem and ultimately into the metropolis at a time of great political weakness.<sup>5a</sup> In the north, the struggle with Agades had abated with Borno having lost control of the salt trade. Here too, the prolonged conflict led to a southward drift of population into the metropolis and the Sosebaki states. In the latter, the social commotion accompanying the entry of various immigrants culminated in a number of revolts which probably provoked the Felata into rebellion, first against local leaders and eventually against the central government. Certainly, the military decline of Borno left the Felata in various parts of the empire to fend for themselves. Relations between the Felata and their hosts in some areas were good. In Daya, for example, they strongly supported the chief when he revolted against the authority of the Mai in c. 1805.<sup>6</sup> In fact, it was this support that enabled the Dayama to defeat the Kaigamas on two occasions. It is therefore fairly clear that by the beginning of the 19th century Felata discontent in Borno was transformed into active hostility against the central government.

Even though the Felata in Borno had been living under very difficult conditions, there is no doubt that the rise of Uthman Dan Fodio with the support of scholars, and pastoral Felata and his subsequent victory against Gobir, one of the leading powers in Hausaland, stimulated their rebellion. Similarly, the failure of the Mai to deal with the Dayama and his defeats of the Kaigama, which seriously impaired the credibility of the Borno forces, were further encouragements to the Felata. Thus, shortly after the

5. Barth, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 51.

5a. See J. Lavers, "The Decline and fall of the Sefuwa", *Borno Seminar Papers*, Ahmadu Bello University, 1973 pp. 13-15.

6. S. Koelle, *African Native Literature*, London, 1854, pp. 213-23.



defeat of the Kaigama by the forces at Daya in 1805, the Felata in the western dependencies, Shira, Auyo and Tचना revolted against the Borno government.<sup>7</sup> In the dry season of 1806-7, Ardo'en Abdur (Bi Abdur) and Lerlima, both Cima Jilibe under the Galadima, began raids in the countryside of Machena. The former died shortly afterwards and his activities were continued by his sons, Umaru and Sambo Digimasa. With a flag from the Shehu Uthman dan Fodio a full jihad was started and with the conquest of several places around Rinde the nucleus of the emirate of Hadejia, which came into being in 1809, was created.<sup>8</sup>

While the Digimasa brothers were active in the west, Ardo Lerlima confined his activities to the environs of Nguru. A native of Kaburi near Nguru and a son-in-law of the Galadima, he too declared his support for the Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio, but he was reluctant to take up arms against his father-in-law. Nevertheless, his open support for the jihadist in Hausaland meant that he had renounced his allegiance to the Mai of Borno and so he was attacked and defeated by the Mai Ahmad in 1807.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, this was a very serious blow to the Felata. But not long afterwards the other ardo'en who had been operating elsewhere, Umaru and Sambo from Rinde and Ibrahim Zaki from Shira, quickly mobilized in aid of their defeated colleague. The subsequent battle of Nguru was a disaster for Borno. Not only was the town destroyed and burnt, the Galadima, hitherto the most powerful official in the empire, and a number of other officials lost their lives. This remarkable feat, undoubtedly, gave further impetus to the Felata revolt. Thenceforth, their aim was not just independence but to overthrow the government of the Mai in Gazargamo.

The next affront to the Borno government came from the south. Shortly, after *konu* (war) Nguru, the intellectual community in Wurobokki under the leadership of Gwoni Mukhtar organized themselves and received a flag from the Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio.<sup>10</sup> In 1807 they performed the hijra to Gujba and in the following year they opened their campaign by advancing into metropolitan Borno when they eventually succeeded in forcing their way into Gazargamo. The Mai Ahmad, his leading officials and their families fled to the easternmost part of the metropolis. Certainly, the abandonment of the capital was a retreat from defeat. Thus, by 1808 the Sefuwa system was practically destroyed, "the once mighty kingdom was in a state of chaos and on the brink of collapse".<sup>11</sup>

Before examining how the Bornoan authorities dealt with the challenge of the Felata it is essential to comment on the issue of whether the jihad against Borno was Islamic. In fact, the Mais Ali and his successor were very pious and godly. Similarly, the Kanuri in general were highly Islamised just like the Fulbe Torobe in Hausaland and elsewhere. Moreover, the situation in Gobir whereby a Muslim community was

7. For details on the Felata revolts in Borno see *ibid*; being an eye witness account by Ali Aisami W.F. Gowers, *Gazetteer of Kano Province*, London, 1921, pp. 31-36. J.M. Fremantle, "A History of the Region Comprising the Katagum Division of Kano Province", *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 10, 1910-11, pp. ; D. Stenning, *Savanna Nomads*, London, 1959, p. 30ff. and Y. Urvoy, *Histoire des Empires du Bornou*, Paris, 1949.

8. Gowers, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

9. Fremantle, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

10. V.N. Low, *Three Nigerian Emirates*, Evanston, 1973, pp. 110-12.

11. L. Brenner, *The Shebus of Kukawa*, London, 1973, p. 32.

oppressed and prevented from expansion through conversion had certainly not developed in Borno. The fact that Borno had rendered aid to the Hausa states against the jihadist<sup>12</sup> as well as the argument that the jihad in Borno took place mainly in the dependencies heavily peopled by non-Muslims are not sufficient to justify the Islamic motive in the Felata revolt. True, such people as the Manga, Bolewa and Ngizim had remained overwhelmingly pagan in spite of their long contacts and association with the Kanuri, but there is no indication that the Felata were prevented from Islamising them. What is clear from the foregoing therefore is that political motive was uppermost in the Felata rebellion in Borno. Socially and politically isolated from the Kanuri and their government, the Felata, quite naturally, looked forward to a time when their condition would change. The successful prosecution of a jihad in Hausaland was a big encouragement to the Felata in Borno and so they too resorted to it in order to end their subservience to the Kanuri. It would appear as if they had exaggerated the situation with regard to the state of Islam in Borno so as to win the support of Dan Fodio and his lieutenants in Gobir. But by and large, their rebellion was motivated initially by a desire for independence, *maral hore*. Having succeeded at the local level they faced the government in Gazargamo not necessarily to overthrow it but to safeguard what they had already achieved. This probably explains the extension of fighting into the metropolis which was predominantly inhabited by the Kanuri.

The victory of Gwoni Mukhtar and his supporters at the konu Gazargamo was a testimony to the decay of the Sefuwa administration under the feeble Mai Ahmad b. Ali. However the Felata occupation of the imperial capital did not last long. The support of common men, which was partly responsible for the total victory of the jihad in the Hausa states, was lacking in the case of Borno. The generality of the Kanuri were very hostile to the invaders and this made it very difficult for them to hold the capital. But by far the most important factor is that Borno found its 'man of the hour' in the person of Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi who mobilized enough support to deal with the various problems confronting the empire.

### The Emergence of Al-Kanemi

By the end of the first decade of the 19th century, the western dependencies of Borno were forever lost to the Felata. Similarly, the government of the Galadima, the leading Bornoan feudatory based at Nguru, was also destroyed. Above all, the double defeat of the Borno army in the south, the destruction of Nguru, the Felata occupation of Gazargamo and its abandonment by the Mai Ahmad pointed out clearly the uselessness of the old military system under the Kaigamas. It is therefore not surprising that the government of the fugitive Mai found it necessary to seek outside assistance and the man he turned to was a leading Islamic scholar of Kanembu parentage, Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi b. Muhammad Fahi. Born probably in Fean in c. 1775/76, he belonged to the Arab Islamic tradition of north-east Africa where he received his Islamic education.<sup>13</sup> Returning to Borno about 1799, he settled at Ngala

12. R.M. East, (ed.), *Labaran Hausawa da Makwabtansu*, Vol. 1, Zaria, 1933; M. Bello, *infaq al. Maysur*, trans. Arthett, *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, Kano, 1922, p. 133.

13. Brenner, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

as a preacher among the Shua Arabs and the Kanembu. A highly respected sheik, he had been known for hostility to Felata pretensions in the Chad districts. It may have been partly for this reason that the Mai Ahmad requested his assistance against the Felata.

When Mai Ahmad contacted al-Kanemi, he responded at once and lent his support. The strength of the Felata in occupation of Gazargamo had weakened as most of them were forced to flee either by the hostility of the Kanuri or by the need to return to their occupation. Thus, when al-Kanemi and the Mai confronted Gwoni Mukhtar his support had already dwindled. It was therefore not difficult for them to re-enter Gazargamo. Gwoni Mukhtar and several of his leading supporters lost their lives in the encounter. Thanks to the courage and valour of the Suguriti Kanembu spearmen<sup>14</sup> Mai Ahmad began the task of restoring normalcy to the capital and the surrounding countryside. But not long afterwards the Felata struck once more. Ibrahim Zaki, the son of the Iman of Shira, having built up his position in the west by establishing the emirate of Katagum, moved against the Borno authority and like Gwoni Mukhtar before him, he entered Gazargamo and forced the Mai Ahmad to flee eastwards.<sup>15</sup> Once more al-Kanemi was contacted and the support he lent again accounted for the second expulsion of the Felata. It was also through his support and leadership that the last and final Felata attack under Muhammad Manga b. Gwoni Mukhtar was beaten off.

Undoubtedly, al-Kanemi contributed immensely to the final removal of Felata threats to Borno and this was widely known throughout the empire. After his initial help he was rewarded with "gifts of money, cattle and slaves", but following his second he requested and obtained "a gift of land, and a field around Ngurno"<sup>16</sup> and this eventually became the main centre of political activity in Borno. More so because Dunama who had succeeded his father as the Mai in 1809 made up his mind not to return to Gazargamo and he also failed to settle permanently at one place to re-consolidate his authority and to deal effectively with the enormous problems facing Borno. Even by 1812 its government was in a position of extreme weakness. The western dependencies had become part of the newly established Sokoto Caliphate and the emirates were in full control of the trade routes to the old Hausa states. In the south, the tradition of revolt persisted among the Felata group and in the east, unrest was developing in Bagarmi, possibly as a corollary to the collapse of the Sefuwa. Borno also faced new dangers from the north and east. In the latter, the Sultanate of Wadai was suddenly transformed into a growing power under very energetic rulers, Abd al-Karim Sabun (1805-15) and this successor Yusuf Kharifayya (1815-30).<sup>17</sup> The expansionist policy of the sultanate was certainly a big threat to Bagarmi and Kanem. In regard to the north, Fezzan too was becoming a threat to Borno as from c. 1812.<sup>18</sup>

14. Barth, op. cit., vol. II, p. 600.

15. Bello, op. cit., p. 138.

16. Brenner, op. cit., p. 34.

17. Barth, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 550ff.

18. For details on relations between Borno and the Karamanlis and Otoymanis see G.F. Lyon, *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa in the years 1818, 1819 and 1820*, London, 1821; B.G. Martins, "Five letters from the Tripoli Archives". *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, Dec. 1962, pp. 350-72 and "Kanem, Bornu and the Fezzan, Notes on the political history of a trade route", *Journal of African History*, Vol. I, 1969, and Brenner, op. cit., p. 51ff.

Its Qaimmaqam raided Kanem from time to time, and eventually took control of the trans-Saharan trade route, through which firearms and other commodities were exported to Borno. The Mai Dunama and his feudatories were quite helpless in the face of these varied dangers. It is therefore against this background that the growing importance of al-Kanemi in Borno politics should be considered.

When Mai Dunama failed to deal with the numerous state problems, opposition to his continued stay in office mounted. More so because not only was his succession in 1809 wrong but because he had allowed al-Kanemi a considerable influence at court. He was therefore deposed in 1811 after a palace revolt and replaced by his uncle Muhammadu Ngileruma with the hope that things might change for the better in Borno. But the new Mai did not achieve much; he only succeeded in founding a new capital, Blrni Jadid near Ngorno, thereby ending the wanderings of the Sefuwa. In internal and external affairs, he "was compelled, for the security of what remained of the kingdom, to employ al-Kanemi and his Kanembu and Shuwa warriors as a defence force".<sup>19</sup> It was from this position that al-Kanemi deposed Ngileruma and re-instated Dunama his former patron in 1814. By this time, the Ngorno scholar had "become the most powerful individual in Borno . . . the leading courtier of a king who was indebted to him for the throne".<sup>20</sup> As if to commemorate the occasion, al-Kanemi founded a new capital, Kukawa in the country of his leading supporters, the Sugurti Kanembu. Having brought the maiship under his control he turned his attention to the Galadima, the next powerful office in Borno. In 1815 he deposed the Galadima Ganama and in 1818, when he deposed Galadima Gumsumi he moved their headquarters from distant Nguru to Borsari, nearer Kukawa, for effective supervision.<sup>21</sup> In 1820 Mai Dunama was killed in battle against Bagarmi and when his younger brother Ibrahim was installed by al-Kanemi, the latter also assumed full powers of government by striking a seal in his own name. Thus, the Shehu dynasty was born.

### Political and Economic Reconstruction 1820-37

Although the maiship continued to exist in Borno down to 1846, there is no doubt that as from 1820 al-Kanemi was the real master in the empire. Having brought the old royalty and nobility under his control he concentrated his efforts on political and economic reconstruction. Quite naturally, he faced the problem of external threats from all directions in order to safeguard the Borno frontiers. In the east, Bagarmi had been active in the region to the west of the river Shari as from c. 1816 and so al-Kanemi moved to the region and inflicted a serious defeat against Bagarmi in c. 1824. Eventually, a truce was arranged and when al-Kanemi married a Bagarmi woman a

19. Brenner, op. cit., p. 35.

20. Ibid., p. 36.

21. A.K. Benisheik, 'The Galadimas of Bornu: A Study of the role of the Galadimas in the Bornuan government from earliest times to the end of the 19th century', B.A. Hons dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, June 1972) and also 'The 19th century Galadimas of Bornu: A preliminary survey of their role under the Kanemi shehus', *Borno Seminar Papers*, Zaria, 1973.



new alliance was cemented in the traditional way.<sup>22</sup> By this feat, Borno's eastern boundary was secured on the Shari-Logone and this continued down to 1893.

From the eastern frontier al-Kanemi turned to his most serious enemies, the Felata, whose emirates of Hadejia, Katagum, Gombe and Gombina surrounded Borno to the west and south. Even though the Felata had not attacked metropolitan Borno since c. 1811, the possibility of further attacks was never out since a formal treaty or truce had never been contracted. Moreover Borno had not renounced its claims over the western dependencies where the new emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate had been established. Thus, when al-Kanemi began his western campaigns in 1824 his aim was to impose his own authority over the territories in the west "which had remained virtually a no-man's land" since the outbreak of the Felata rebellion.<sup>23</sup> He may have also looked forward to regaining control of the lost territories or forcing the Felata rulers to accept some sort of territorial arrangement which would not be detrimental to Borno's long term political and economic interests.

The first target for al-Kanemi in the west was the black Shuwa. After destroying their settlements he subdued them and then proceeded to the borderland of the emirates of Hadejia and Katagum. As no major battle was fought he returned to Kukawa content with the captives and cattle he scoured from the countryside. But in the following year he devastated Katagum, forcing the Emir Dan Kawu to flee and in 1826, in pursuit of Muhammad Manga, he advanced to as far as a hundred kilometers to Kano city. Even though he had no intention of attacking Kano, his deep penetration into the Caliphate caused a general alarm and the Caliph Muhammad Bello directed the Emir Yakub of Bauchi to mobilize against the intruder. While al-Kanemi was in retreat after failing to apprehend Muhammad Manga, he was intercepted by the Emir Yakub and the two generals met at the battle of Fake.<sup>24</sup> While Bauchi claimed victory, Borno was by no means vanquished. As the outcome of the 1826 war was not decisive, hostilities between the two sides gradually abated. While Borno claimed to have checked Felata hostilities, the Caliphate claimed to have ended Borno's threat to its eastern emirates. Muhammad Manga who had been most active against Borno, was permitted by the Caliph Bello to settle at Misau and to collect *jangali* from all former Felata Borno.<sup>25</sup> On his part, al-Kanemi initiated a policy of establishing military posts under kachallas at Borsari, Gujba and Biriri as from 1835 to protect the western frontier. Since then, the Borno-Caliphate frontier remained more or less stable throughout the rest of the 19th century.

From the west, al-Kanemi's efforts were directed against the northern dependencies of Damagaram, Muniyo and Gumel which were formerly under the supervision of the Galadima. He succeeded in re-asserting Borno's control in the north except in Gumel where its ruler Dan Hauwa had, since the fall of Nguru, been acting as an inde-

22. For details of this expedition see E. W. Bovill (ed.), Denham, Clapperton & Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the years 1822, 1823 and 1824*, Cambridge, 1964, pp. 539-54.

23. Brenner, op. cit., p. 55.

24. Ahmad Mahmud, *Tarikh Umara Bauchi* (NHRS Arabic Collection, Zaria) and East, op. cit.

25. Gowers, op. cit., p. 33.



pendent ruler. But in 1828 he surrendered when Borno forces invaded his capital.<sup>26</sup> All the same, he was deposed and sent to the Galadima as a captive. Gumel, under a new chief, Dan Tanoma, passed from the control of the Galadima to the Shehu in Kukawa. But this arrangement did not please the Galadima and in defiance of the Shehu's orders he killed Dan Hauwa, the deposed chief of Gumel entrusted to him as prisoner. Consequently, an expedition set out against the Galadima but he escaped to Sokoto.<sup>27</sup> By the 1830s, the problem of Gumel was resolved but the position of the Galadima ceased being significant in Borno politics.

The position of Borno in Kanem was very obscure. As early as c. 1810 the khalifa Mele Kura was deposed by Borno but he was later re-established by the sultan of Wadai, Abd al-Karim Sabun. However, after the death of Mele Kura, Borno again appointed his brother, Ari Mairam. But not long afterwards he was killed by the supporters of Wadai. Since then Borno lost control of Kanem to Wadai and al-Kanemi merely resorted to diplomacy in order to limit the powers of Wadai on the eastern frontier. His alliance first with the Fezzanis in the 1820s and later with the Aulad Sulayman Arab in the 1830s was aimed at checking the activities of Wadai in Kanem and neutralising its threat to Borno.

In regard to the economy, Borno's external connections had always been very important. Realizing this, al-Kanemi strove to normalize relations with his neighbours in order to ensure continued healthy commercial intercourse. Following the unofficial cessation of hostilities with the Sokoto Caliphate in 1826, commercial relations with Hausaland returned to what they had been before the jihad. The trade routes, through Nguru and by the valley of the River Iggi, were reopened, thereby facilitating the flow of resources into the not too fertile Borno metropolis. But commercial relations with North Africa were not resumed immediately because the Fezzan took control of the trans-Saharan trade route. However in the 1820s al-Kanemi entered into alliance with Fezzan,<sup>28</sup> and together with Borno they raided Bagarmi and Kanem. The various joint expeditions were by and large successful and Fezzan acquired slaves and other spoils of war. The significance of this alliance for Borno was that the trans-Saharan route was re-opened to trade until the 1830s when Fezzan lost control of the trade route to the Aulad Sulayman Arabs under Sultan Abd al-Jalil and this explains al-Kanemi's alliance with them as from that period.

Shehu al-Kanemi also resorted to diplomacy in regard to the Ottoman authorities in North Africa. The Mais of Borno had for long styled themselves emir al-muminin and this probably dates back to the disappearance of the Askia dynasty in Songhay. One of the most famous Mais of Borno, Idris Alooma, was certainly a serious Muslim ruler and his wars were called jihad by his Imam, Ahmad b. Fartua.<sup>29</sup> The Mais of Borno down to the beginning of the 18th century interfered in the government of other states

26. Ibid. p. 26. See also P. A. Benton, *The Sultanate of Bornu*, trans. A. Schultze, *Dans Sultanat von London*, 1913, p. 261-65.

27. For details on the conflict between Galadima Umar and al-Kanemi see Benisheik, "A Preliminary Survey", pp. 8-9.

28. Martin, "Five letters", pp. 350-73; and Lyon, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

29. Ibn Fatua, Ahmad, *Tarikh Mai Idris*, trans. Palmer as *The First Twelve Years of the reign of Mai Idris Alooma*, Lagos, 1928, *passim*.

without any serious challenge because of their exalted position—commander of the faithful. But in the 1830s al-Kanemi extended Borno's recognition to the Ottoman Caliphs. This was significant in two ways. Firstly, it marked the formal end of the Borno Caliphate and secondly, since al-Kanemi had made it clear that the spiritual leadership of Sokoto should not be accepted so long as the Ottoman Caliphate existed, his recognition of the latter was tantamount to a rejection of the newly established Sokoto Caliphate.

The acceptance of the Ottoman Caliphate by al-Kanemi did not alter the real position of Borno in so far as sovereignty was concerned. The Porte exercised no control whatever over the affairs of Borno; in fact Borno was too far away to be controlled. Certainly, the recognition was a good testimony of al-Kanemi's excellent diplomacy. It ended all hostilities to Borno from North Africa and furthered good economic relations with the Middle East in general and the Mediterranean coast in particular. By the 1830s the position of Borno was much improved in the Muslim world; it was, in fact, better known than the newly established Sokoto Caliphate. Undoubtedly, al-Kanemi had won new friends for Borno—first the Karamanlis and later the Ottomans—and had also gained international acceptance for his new regime. Above all, his successful defence of Borno's frontiers at a time of great weakness succeeded in re-establishing the international reputation of the Bornoan government.

Having neutralized the major threats to the existence of Borno, al-Kanemi turned to internal problems. Thenceforth, the rebuilding of a sound and effective government with a strong military force to sustain it became his major pre-occupation. He therefore started with transforming the old Bornoan institutions. The old feudal offices, *Mai*, *Maina* and *Koguna* were retained but with greatly reduced powers. All the leading officials except the *Galadima* continued to live in the capital as members of the *Nokena* (council of state). The *Galadima*'s capital was also moved to Borsari nearer the capital and with his territories gone he had little power in the state. Gradually, al-Kanemi appointed his leading supporters as positions of non-hereditary *koguna* fell vacant.

The general ascendancy of the Shehu and his supporters over the old office-holders was achieved largely by the collapse of the Sefuwa military power. The old feudal levies were no longer effective and so al-Kanemi began to develop a new militia under his control. The Sugurti Kanembu spearmen, Shua Arabs and slave gunmen formed the backbone of troops. With horses available from Bahr Gazal in the east, the Shua Arabs formed an effective cavalry supporting the spear-armed Sugurti Kanembu infantrymen. The new Borno army developed considerable field experience through constant military engagements. The heterogenous nature of the army opened the door to promotion on merit; thus, a new officer class, *kachalla*, emerged and they functioned as commanders of important garrisons within Borno. The majority of the *kachallas* were slaves in origin, but all the same they were made fief holders and members of *Nokena*. Thus, the emergence of al-Kanemi was accompanied by an important social development in Borno; the key to advancement was no longer free birth but loyalty to the Shehu and selfless service to the regime. For the first time in the long history of Borno dependent peoples were given a stake in the central government.

There was also a new elite of advisors emerging around al-Kanemi at the centre. It comprised six officials of varying ethnic and political background such as Muhammad

Tirab, Tatri al-Kanemi, Hajj Sudani, Ahmad Gwanimi, Ibrahim Wadaina and Shettima Kubri, all being either early associates or supporters of the Shehu in Borno.<sup>30</sup> They thus formed an international group outside the old Sefuwa system which had become a mere facade. Each advisor was given fiefs and he used his position and influence to ensure the loyalty of the various localities. Muhammad Tirab, the leader of the advisors, founded a dynasty of Arab Wazirs who exercised very powerful influence in Bornoan politics throughout the 19th century. By and large, al-Kanemi succeeded in replacing an old, effete and idle government with a new active Regime which was loyal to him and commanded the respect of subjects. The al-Kanemi Regime was also concerned with raising the moral tone of society along Islamic lines. The Shehu's efforts to stamp out prostitution in Kukawa, his letters to the *Ulema* exhorting them to guide people on the true path through teachings and preachings proved his commitment to Islamic reform of society. It is also significant that the only recorded literary work of the Shehu is a short treatise on the proper implementation of Islamic law on marriage.

### **The Sefuwa Revolt and other Problems, 1837-46**

When al-Kanemi died in 1837 Borno's major problems were virtually solved. But the establishment of two new emirates by the Felata, Misau in c. 1831 and Jama'are in c. 1835,<sup>31</sup> re-heightened tension on the western frontier and it fell upon his successor, Shehu Umar, to deal with the new situation. Consequently, he launched several campaigns to the west in order to check further encroachment on his territory. In retaliation, the Emir Sambo of Hadejia raided through Bedde to Damaturu before he was checked. However, the situation was not allowed to deteriorate as both sides realized that they "had more to gain from friendly relations than from mutual hostility".<sup>32</sup> It is even suggested that formal peace was made between Shehu Umar and the Sokoto Caliph Aliyu Babba.<sup>33</sup>

The northern dependency of Zinder took the opportunity of al-Kanemi's death to assert its independence. In c. 1841 for example, the Mai Zinder, Ibrahim b. Sulaiman attacked Dungus and Gure, within Borno, probably with a view to incorporating them into his expedition. Shehu Umar reacted by sending Galadima Dunama and Kachalla Rabo at the head of an expedition against Mai Ibrahim of Zinder. The town of Zinder was occupied and the Mai deposed and replaced with his brother, Tanimu b. Sulaiman. While in deposition Ibrahim improved his relations with Borno and he was re-instated as Mai Zinder by Shehu Umar in c. 1843. But not long afterwards Zinder was once more in rebellion and the seriousness of the situation compelled Shehu Umar to despatch his brother, Abdurrahman, with the bulk of the Borno army. He eventually succeeded in pacifying Zinder and reducing it once more to vassalage.

The most serious problem for Shehu Umar on accession to office was that of the Sefuwa. The last attempt by this dynasty to re-assert authority was in 1820 when

30. Brenner op. cit., pp. 37-38.; Bovill op. cit., p. 318ff.

31. Gowers, op. cit., pp. 33-36.

32. Brenner, op. cit., p. 65.

33. D.M. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London, 1967, p. ?

34. Stenning, D. op. cit., p. 68.

Dunama entered into alliance with Burgomanda of Bagarmi against al-Kanemi. But the move boomeranged as Mai Dunama was killed during the Bagarmi expedition. The Shehu did not, however, abrogate the office of Mai; he merely appointed Dunama's younger brother, Ibrahim, to the office. The latter maintained only "a shadowy existence-preserving the title 'Mai', and the rituals and ceremonies traditionally associated with the monarchy, on condition of good behaviour".<sup>35</sup> However, when al-Kanemi died in 1837 the Mai Ibrahim, quite naturally, felt that he would thenceforth take over the piloting of the ship of state. According to Brenner, Mai Ibrahim sent to the newly installed Shehu Umar to come to Birni Kafela to tender his allegiance.<sup>36</sup> The latter, on the other hand, requested the Mai to come to Kukawa for the same and it was made clear to him that the death of al-Kanemi did not change the political situation in Borno. After all, "all the courtiers, horses and weapons are still with his son, Umar".<sup>37</sup> Militarily, the Mai was in a hopeless position and so he had no choice but to comply. As a result of this episode, the meagre subsidy to the Mai was further reduced by Shehu Umar.

The deterioration of relations between Kukawa and Birni Kafela left the Mai Ibrahim with no alternative but to make concerted efforts to regain control of his domain, if need be through the use of force. Having virtually no army under his control, Ibrahim had to look for outside aid, just like his brother had done in 1820. For a number of reasons, he turned to the sultanate of Wadai. First, Bagarmi which had aided Mai Dunama had become subordinate to Wadai and was weakened by raids from Fezzan. Secondly, relations between Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate were much improved in the 1840s and the latter would therefore not ally with Ibrahim simply to oust Shehu Umar for him. Wadai, on the other hand, "harboured no great love for Kukawa" and "was therefore a natural ally for the Mai".<sup>38</sup> Following an invitation, Muhammad ash-Sharif of Wadai invaded Borno at a time when the bulk of its army was away to Zinder on campaign. Nevertheless, Shehu Umar gathered the available forces, imprisoned Mai Ibrahim, and moved to combat the advancing Wadains. But he was forced to withdraw with heavy losses at Kusseri.

When the victorious Wadains entered the abandoned capital, they found that Mai Ibrahim was executed and so they installed his young son Ali as his successor. Meanwhile the forces at the command of Shehu Umar were re-inforced by the main body of the army under Abba Abdurraman from Zinder and so they turned on the invaders. But the Wadains decided to retreat, leaving the newly installed Mai Ali b. Ibrahim to face the overwhelmingly superior army of Shehu Umar. The small but brave army of the Sefuwa made its last stand at Minarge where the Mai Ali and virtually all his supporters lost their lives.<sup>39</sup> Shehu Umar followed up his victory by destroying Birni Kafela and hunting down other leading members of the Sefuwa. Thus, by 1846 the Sefuwa after ruling Kanem-Borno for about a millenium had come to a tragic end.

35. Hodgkin, op. cit., p. 58.

36. Brenner, op. cit., p. 64.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 65n.

39. Barth, op. cit., VII. II, p. 603. Palmer, *Bornu, Sahara*, p. 268.



The final disappearance of the Sefuwa from public life meant that the dynastic revolution had come to stay. Thenceforth, all members of the koguna were supporters of the Shehu and all fiefs were held by his loyal lieutenants. The old class of royalty, mainly, disappeared in favour of members of the al-Kanemi family, *abba*, who began to be prominent in Borno politics. The new Borno government was much less rigidly aristocratic than that of the Sefuwa; it was also much more adaptable and versatile. What was more remarkable is that down mid-century, a career in the Bornoan government was open to talents.

### **The Revolt of Abdurrahman and its Aftermath; 1850-81**

The demise of the Sefuwa in Borno was followed by a number of developments. First, the solidarity of the power elite in Kukawa was broken as they were no longer afraid of being ousted by the legitimate rulers of Borno. Secondly, the Shehu's court was expanded by the adoption of some of the Sefuwa titles and by the coming of some former courtiers of the Mai from Birni. Thirdly, as the Shehu had lost some of his very senior advisors on the battle of Minarge new people were elevated to important positions in the government. Muhammad Tirab and Ahmad Gonimi, who died in the conflict, were replaced in the Shehu's court by their sons, Majj Bashir and Hamza, respectively.<sup>40</sup> The former who had for long been very close to Shehu Umar was eventually named as the Wazir and he eventually became the chief confidant of the monarch. Having undue personal influence over Umar, Hajj Bashir used his position to acquire excessive wealth as he controlled the best fiefs and monopolized the important northern trade route with the support of the Aulad Sulayman Arabs.<sup>41</sup> Because of this Hajj Bashir became the envy of other courtiers and members of the al-Kanemi family. By the 1850s the number of courtiers and royal members had increased remarkably and as there was no corresponding increase of offices in the government the burden of looking after them fell on the Shehu. Moreover, in spite of the availability of more people than positions, the system of succession which changed from merit to heredity tampered with the wishes of the Shehu and so Borno's political history in the 19th century was marked by intrigue, intense struggle for political offices and quest for the Shehu's favour. The situation was exacerbated by the Shehu's weakness and indecisiveness and so, while "vicious political struggles" ensued within the court "the external power of the state"<sup>42</sup> deteriorated.

The most outstanding members of the al-Kanemi family was Abba Abdurrahman, the Shehu's younger brother who had distinguished himself in the military field. He had successfully pacified Zinder and played the key role in the conflict with the Sefuwa. Like most of the other officials of the Borno government, Abdurrahman was strongly opposed to the dominant position of the Waziri Hajj Bashir and his manipulation of the Shehu. The rivalry between the two most senior Borno officials culminated in open clashes when, in 1853 Abdurrahman mustered enough support and overthrew the Shehu. The Wazir Hajj Bashir fled to the Chad district before he was lured into returning to Kukawa where he was eventually executed.

40. Brenner, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 7173.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 72.



The accession of Abdurrahman to the shehuship was initially welcomed by most of the courtiers because he ended the predominance of Hajj Bashir in the state. But the enthusiasm of the courtiers did not last for long. The new Shehu proved to be hard, arbitrary and tyrannical in his ways. Thus he was worse in comparison to his ousted brother and within one year the leading courtiers and slaves, mostly alienated by Abdurrahman, were openly in favour of re-instating Shehu Umar. After all, they had opposed him because he had allowed too much free latitude to the deceased Hajj Bashir. In September 1854 the courtiers and the people of Kukawa forced Abdurrahman out of office and re-appointed Shehu Umar to his position. The former was eventually put to death because "his political ambition had not diminished".<sup>43</sup>

The 1853/54 rebellion had serious consequences for Borno. Firstly, the two violent changes of government were accompanied by widespread administrative and political disruptions. Secondly, the execution of Abdurrahman greatly affected the position of the military in Borno and for a number of years the army lost its dynamic leadership. Lastly, it was bad for Borno that Shehu Umar, like the Bourbons of France, had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing from the events of 1853/54. He returned to power with his favourites to whom he once more totally surrendered the conduct of public affairs. Thus his second reign was on the whole uneventful. No longer very active in state matters, Umar may have been exhausted by the emergencies of his first seventeen years reign and, unlike his father, failed to deal effectively with the new elite of advisors.

The various internal problems, the Sefuwa revolt and the 1853/54 rebellion, weakened the position of Borno *vis-a-vis* its neighbours and its control of its dependencies. But the position began to change slightly in the 1860s following the emergence of Bukar, Shehu Umar's eldest son, as a courageous military leader. Together with Lamin Njitiya, Hajj Bashir's successor, they conquered large parts of Margiland and incorporated them into Borno.<sup>44</sup> More important was the re-imposition of the authority of the Shehu over Mandara which they brought about. The activities of Borno in both Margiland and Mandara brought it into conflict with the *Lamibe* of *Fombina* which lasted down to the end of Shehu Umar's reign.<sup>45</sup> Borno's activities in the west were largely towards maintaining the balance of power with the Sokoto Caliphate. In the 1850s, for example, Shehu Umar threw his weight behind the Emir Buhari of Hadejia who had revolted against the Sokoto Caliph.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Buhari, as an ally of Borno, spread devastation in the eastern emirates thereby keeping them in check for Kukawa. It was not until after the end of the Buhari rebellion in 1863 that Borno reactivated its military activity on the western frontier. Abba Bukar, Borno's new military leader, led several successful campaigns against Bedde, Ngizim, Kerkeri and Fika in the late sixties and early seventies. But he was not permitted to extend his activities into the eastern emirates perhaps because Shehu Umar did not want to re-impair Borno's relation with Sokoto.

43. Ibid., p. 79.

44. Ibid., p. 83.

45. See S. Abubakar, "Relations between Bornu and Fombina before 1901" (*Bornu Seminar paper*, ABU Zaria 1973); and Barth, Vol. II, op. cit., 18/ff.

46. Low, op. cit., pp. 136-45, Gowers, op. cit., pp. 22-23, and Last, op. cit., pp. 159-60.

There were economic difficulties also during the second reign of Shehu Umar. As Brenner rightly points out, the "long term prosperity for the Borno leadership was tied to the trans-Saharan trade".<sup>47</sup> But the activities of the Aulad Sulayman Arabs, rendered the route to Fezzan very insecure thereby endangering Borno's trade with the north. The western route to Hausaland was also not very safe because of the Tuaregs who periodically attacked Borno territory for loot. There was also decreasing demand for Borno's major commodity—slaves—in North Africa.<sup>48</sup> This was certainly a serious blow to the big men of Kukawa, more so because they were no longer in firm control of the major sources for slaves. The Aulad Sulayman Arabs and the Lamibe of Fombina were serious rivals to Borno's slaving activities in Kanem and Margiland, respectively. Thus, when Shehu Umar died in 1881 Borno's political and economic condition( were not very impressive. The Shehu was a mere figurehead in government, real authority was wielded by his lieutenants, Lamin Njitiya down to 1871 and subsequently by Bukar and Ahmad b. Gonimi. Thus it can be said that Borno's drift towards decline and collapse had begun.

### **The Decline and Overthrow of the Shehus: 1881-93**

Bukar, the new Shehu of Borno, was a very capable and energetic military leader who continued his policy of active campaigns on the western and southern frontiers. He also kept a standing army of about ten thousand men on the Shari, probably as a check against Wadai's encroachment. While, militarily, Borno was not lethargic, its economy was still in bad shape. Even though the Shehu tried to re-interest the Arabs in Borno trade,<sup>49</sup> the situation made no appreciable improvement. Not only did the need for slaves in North Africa decline, but the economic depression of the 1880s in Europe affected the demand for Borno's other commodities—ostrich feathers and ivory.<sup>50</sup> The situation was so bad for Borno that Shehu Bukar had to resort to *Kumoreji* (appropriation of peasants wealth) in order to raise badly needed funds to finance a military expedition to Wadai. But he died before the collection of the *kumoreji* was completed.

The unexpected death of Shehu Bukar in 1884 threw the political scene of Borno into confusion over the issue of succession. The obvious and rightful successor, Abba Ibrahim, was by-passed by the electors for his uncle Mustafa b. al-Kanemi. The former, supported by the slave riflemen and some courtiers, forced himself into office as the new Shehu. His uncle, who had refused to accept the situation and moved out of Kukawa with his supporters, was pursued and killed by a detachment of troops from the capital.<sup>51</sup> Thus, Ibrahim became the undisputed Shehu of Borno inheriting various economic and political problems from the precedings reigns. His first major task was the re-organization of his court and he proceeded to appoint his favourites to important positions in the government. Tahir, a close friend of the new Shehu became

47. Brenner, op. cit., p. 84.

48. Ibid., p. 85.

49. Ibid.

50. C.W. Newbury, "North African and Western Sudan trade in the 19th century: A re-evaluation". *Journal of African History*, Vol. vii, No. 2, 1966, pp. 233-46.

51. Brenner, op. cit., p. 88.

Wazir and when, faced with serious opposition after deposing the leading kachallas, Shehu Ibrahim planned to remove all his critics from their positions. But he died mysteriously before his plan could be executed.

The death of Ibrahim in 1885 was received with overt relief by the kogunas who lost no time in appointing Hashim b. Umar as the Shehu. He was preferred by the courtiers because he was the most unlikely abba to become a very powerful Shehu and so the "disturbed state of affairs in the kingdom"<sup>52</sup> continued unchecked. The most serious problem remained economic. The Shehu had failed to realize that Borno's external trade could be augmented by establishing relations with the Europeans in the south, especially in view of the decline of commerce with North Africa.<sup>53</sup> Borno's foreign policy was also full of blunders which alienated its neighbours at a time when their assistance was most needed. In Zinder for example Shehu Hashim, rather than assist the Mai, Ibrahim Goto, when he was forced out, confirmed the accession of the usurper, Sulaiman.<sup>54</sup> Borno's assistance to Sultan Moman of Bagarmi was also a blunder since it did not prevent the accession of Gwaranga who had the support of Wadai.<sup>55</sup> The defeat of Moman was therefore tantamount to the defeat of Borno and a discredit to the reputation of Shehu Hashim. Further military setbacks occurred in the 1880s when Zinder conquered and incorporated vast territories at the expense of Borno in Manga and Ngizim lands. It is therefore clear from the foregoing that the Borno military in the last decade of the 19th century was ill-prepared for a major confrontation such as was building up in the east.

The last decade of the 19th century was the era of Rabih who, as a personage associated with the Mahdist exploits in the Sudan, had been forced by Anglo-Egyptian control in the Sudan to seek his fortune westwards.<sup>56</sup> Leading an organized and highly efficient army, he devastated Wadai before moving into Bagarmi which he conquered in 1892. All along Borno was well aware of the happenings in the east but Hashim, as the most powerful ruler in the Chad basin, remained inactive. Rather than move to aid Bagarmi and help check the new danger to his authority before it was too late, Hashim merely restricted the export of guns and ammunition to Rabih; a measure he subsequently failed to enforce.<sup>57</sup> Brenner makes the interesting point that Shehu

52. See *ibid.*, pp. 120ff and for a further account of conditions in Borno under Hashim see P.L. Monteil, *De Saint-Louis à Tripoli par le Lac* Paris, nd., pp. 340ff.

53. In 1891 Charles MacIntosh visited Borno on behalf of the Royal Niger Company to negotiate a trading treaty but Shehu Hashim, frightened by the military appearance of the mission, refused to comply, see J.E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London, 1960, p. 171.

54. Brenner, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

56. For recent studies on the career of Rabih in Borno and the Chad basin see J. Lavers, "Rabih ibn Fadlallah" *Historical Society of Nigeria Congress*, Ibadan 1967) and "Rabih in Bornu", (*Historical Society of Nigeria Congress*, Zaria 1968). R.A. Adeleye, "Rabih Fadlallah 1879-93: Exploits and impact on political relations in Central Sudan", (*Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. V No. 2, June 1970 and also his "Rabih b. Fadlallah and the Diplomacy of European Imperial invasion in the Central Sudan, 1893-1902" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. V No. 3, Dec. 1970 and lastly Ibrahim Imam, *A Short History of Rabih Ibn Fadel Allah 1838-1900*. Lagos, 1974.

57. Brenner, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

Hashim had hoped that Rabih would spare his kingdom and this was probably the reason for his general policy of "wait and see" and "careful avoidance of any confrontation".<sup>58</sup> But as events eventually turned out, Hashim had once more committed a serious error of judgment. With no fear of being surprisingly confronted, Rabih continued to advance westwards and by early 1893 it became clear that Borno was in fact his real target. The entry of the forces of Rabih into Borno threw the Shehu's court into panic and eventually an army commanded by Muhammad Tahir was sent to confront the invasion. But it was soundly defeated near Ngaia. Shehu Hashim personally commanded another expedition which also suffered a resounding defeat at Marte. Consequently the Shehu and his court fled to Geidam in the northwest, abandoning the capital to Rabih and his men. Thus, by 1893 the Borno government had collapsed.

The fall of Kukawa and the conquest of Borno so seriously discredited Shehu Hashim that most of the titled men wanted a change of leadership. It is also said that he had lost interest in continuing his position and so his nephew Kiyari b. Buka was appointed the Shehu of Borno at Gumsa.<sup>59</sup> Then he moved to Geidam so as to re-compose the Borno leadership and re-mobilize the populace in order to face the invaders once more. After executing Hashim, the opposition to continued fighting which he represented was brought to an end and the determined Shehu Kiyari advanced to Kukawa. In the ensuing conflict with Rabih he succeeded in forcing him to retreat. But Kiyari's failure to press home his victory deprived him of total success. It is said that the Borno forces ceased pursuing Rabih because of dusk and this enabled the latter to regroup his army and lead a successful night counter-attack upon the Borno forces.<sup>60</sup> The Shehu was captured and his army was forced to scatter. Thus a possible victory for Borno was turned into a severe defeat through misjudgment. The apprehended Kiyari was given the option of freedom if he would surrender, but he refused and so he was slaughtered in front of his family at Gashegar. His successor, Sanda Wuroma, appointed by the Borno dissidents at Utaro, was also captured and executed at Dikwa.<sup>61</sup> By the end of 1893 therefore, Borno's resistance had crumbled along with the al-Kanemi dynasty.

#### **Borno, Rabih and the Europeans, 1893-1900**

Events in Borno during the last seven years of the 19th century were mainly in connection with the struggle by Rabih to establish his dynasty and the attempts by Britain and France to extend their control in the Chad basin. From the onset, the new Borno administration was concerned with getting the best out of the people. By 1893 the Borno economy was already in chaos and during the crisis period agriculture was neglected thereby making the food situation very bad for the invaders. As a result, troops lived off the country by plunder and in spite of the very many difficulties a general tax was imposed on the people throughout the country and tribute was fixed for the vassal states, such as Mandara, Gumel and Zinder.<sup>62</sup> The fiefs within the

58. Ibid.

59. Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 269. Adeleye, "Exploits and Impact" p. 238.

60. Brenner, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

61. Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

62. Adeleye, "Exploits and Impact", p. 239.

metropolis were taken over by Rabih's lieutenants who supervised the collection of tax from the impoverished citizens. The occupation and plunder of Kukawa also brought much fortune to the new men in authority but, in the end, the external trade of Borno was in decline. The Tripolitan commercial group as well as commercial relations with North Africa were ruined.<sup>63</sup> The activities of Rabih also resulted in the closure of trade routes to Murzuk, Kano and Wadai. At the same time Borno's western and southern neighbours, the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, suddenly became hostile and apprehensive.<sup>64</sup> Thus as Adeleye rightly points out, Rabih "soon built round himself a compact ring of hatred among all neighbouring countries",<sup>65</sup> thereby isolating his new kingdom politically and economically.

The energies of Rabih were therefore directed towards the rebuilding of Bornoan commercial life and external relations which his accession to power had destroyed. But his efforts were attended with limited results. His negotiations with Wadai in the east and Misau in the west for resuming trade relations both failed.<sup>66</sup> Similar requests for commercial intercourse with Zinder, Katagum, Kano and Gumel met with rebuff.<sup>67</sup>

Faced with hostility from former trade partners of Borno, Rabih turned to the Royal Niger Company which, two years before his advent, had made moves to establish trade contacts with Shehu Hashim. But no progress was made as Rabih was mainly interested in acquiring fire-arms which the company was unprepared to provide.<sup>68</sup> It was while Rabih was trying to find a solution to the economic problems of Borno that a new danger began to threaten his position. For quite some time the leading European imperial powers, Britain and France, had cast their eyes on the Chad basin and by 1890 the Say to Barua agreement between the two powers placed a large portion of Borno in Britain's sphere of influence.<sup>69</sup> This was confirmed by the Anglo-French convention of 1898 but neither of the two had made a serious effort to bring the region under effective control. But the French had been active in the east and Rabih may have begun to feel the impending danger to his position. Thus in 1899 a French emissary was strangled at Dikwa and a French force was completely wiped out by Rabih in Bagarmi.<sup>70</sup> These events no doubt forced the French to react against Rabih and early in 1900 an expedition led by General Gentil as part of the French "le rendezvous du Chad" defeated Rabih at Kusseri.<sup>71</sup>

The defeat and subsequent death of Rabih did not immediately bring his regime to an end. His eldest son Fadl-allah escaped with a large following and, hotly pursued by the French, he abandoned Dikwa for Gujba in the south. But he was eventually caught and killed by the French in 1901.<sup>72</sup> This brought the era of Rabih in Borno to an end and the French faced the question of reconstituting the Borno government. When

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 240.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Flint, op. cit., p. 197.

69. E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, vol. II, London, 1967, pp. 739ff.

70. Ibrahim, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

71. Ibid., pp. 33-37.

72. R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria*, London, 1971, pp. 237-38.



Rabih was killed in 1900, they proclaimed Sanda Kura, a member of the al-Kanemi family, as the Shehu in Zinder.<sup>73</sup> He was however deposed in 1901 following the occupation of Dikwa, and Abubakar Garbai was installed on the understanding that he would pay an indemnity of eighty thousand Maria Theresa dollars.<sup>74</sup> But with only about seven thousand dollars to be paid to the French, the British moved in to effect control of their sector and Abubakar offered the throne if he would cease payments to the French. He gladly accepted this proposition and was appointed the Shehu of British Borno in 1902.

## Conclusion

The British occupation of Borno in 1902 brought to an end to the revolution which had been going on since the outbreak of the Felata rebellion in 1807. Indeed, the 19th century was one long period of political instability in Borno. It was the inability of the Sefuwa to meet the challenge of the Felata that gave rise to the emergence of al-Kanemi who, by and large, succeeded in tackling the most serious problems to Borno. Even though he had built up a powerful reputation as a scholar and military leader, he did not oust the Borno ruling dynasty possibly for fear of arousing serious Kanuri hostilities which might not be easy for him to contain. Undoubtedly, al-Kanemi put the Borno economy on a sound footing and he also neutralized the major external threats to the state, but he did not transform the nature of Borno politics. Quite obviously, his achievements in politics were enormous; he replaced the old feudatories with men loyal to himself and established a much more effective military headed by kachallas drawn from all ethnic groups on the basis of merit. The new administration under al-Kanemi as reflected in the composition on his council of advisors and the koguna also gave minorities more stake in government. But, by and large, the structural organization of the Borno state remained unchanged.<sup>75</sup> The monarch, surrounded by titled nobility under the wazir, was still the core of authority and "basic administrative procedures, including a royal court, a set of fragment fiefs and a means of linking local groups to the central administration, changed but little throughout" the 19th century.<sup>76</sup>

The reign of al-Kanemi was not entirely a period of political stability as he had a series of internal challenges to his authority, such as the revolt of the black Shua and of the Mai Dunama in alliance with Bagarmi in 1820. Other problems were taken care of through his excellent diplomacy. But after 1837 things began to change in Borno as Shehu Umar, less capable of dealing with his advisors, surrendered the control of governmental machinery to his favourites. His most serious problem before the 1850s was the attempts by the Sefuwa to re-assert their authority, but this was dealt with successfully. Even though Shehu Umar weathered the storm successfully, the growing

73. Palmer, *Borno, Sahara*, p. 269.

74. Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 33. These were Austrian pure silver coins minted in 1820, the value of each was about 2.5 Francs. It is said that the French demanded the money as a redemption from Abba Sanda Kura ibn Ibrahim at Zinder so as to expel Rabih from Borno.

75. L. Brenner, and R. Cohen, "Bornu in the 19th century" in Ajayi, J.F.A. & Crowder, M. eds., *History of West Africa*, vol. II, London, 1974, p. 117.

76. Ibid., p. 128.

influence of the vizierate in the political and economic life of the state led to the civil war in 1853-54 which seriously weakened the position of the Bornoan government. Hitherto, the Shehu had not been active in the day to day affairs, but thenceforth he totally surrendered everything to his few trusted lieutenants. The decline of trade with North Africa created grave difficulties for the economy and conditions for the idle and large ruling elite deteriorated. Bukar, who had succeeded Umar in 1881, tried to address himself to the problems of the state, but he died after only three years in office. The failure of the king-makers to appoint the most obvious candidate as the Shehu in 1884 plunged Borno into a serious secession conflict attended with an unnecessary dissipation of energy. In the end the unwanted Ibrahim became the Shehu and proceeded to transform the Borno government by eliminating his enemies from key positions. This unnecessary upheaval by the Shehu further weakened the government and even though he did not reign long, the internal wrangling had serious repercussion on the economy also. Ibrahim's successor, Hashim, was appointed Shehu in 1885 simply because of his weakness. That he failed to bring the internal political situation of Borno under his control was therefore not surprising. Thus, Borno under Hashim inadvertently continued to decline. By the 1890s Borno was already a 'toothless bull dog'; its conquest by Rabih therefore marked the close of an important phase in its history of political instability. The al-Kanemi dynasty was overthrown and but for the intervention of European imperial powers Borno would have been its third dynasty in the course of one century.

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA

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**Islam in Southern Nigeria**

With the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, the position of Islam was consolidated in Northern Nigeria. Islam became the official religion of the state, supplying the laws and dominating the intellectual and cultural life of the people. Favoured by the administration, the religion had advantages which appealed to people in the hitherto less-Islamised sections of the vast Caliphate. Although some areas of the Middle belt were unconquered or remained resistant, Islam enjoyed a position of unparalleled favour and strength. These developments in the positions of Islam in the northern parts of Nigeria have already been covered in the history of the Caliphate and of Borno.

No less remarkable for the history of Islam were the great strides that Islam made in the southern parts of the country in the nineteenth century. Before this period, there is evidence of some Islamic "presence" in the form of a few Muslims and of some Islamic activity in Yorubaland. But the Muslims were scattered and their political and social status generally low. This weak position was further shaken by the *jihad*. Suspected and distrusted thereafter, Muslims suffered severe man-handling or even death at the hands of their persecutors and many fled to distant places for protection. Their dispersal was only the forerunner of the large movement of peoples brought about by the series of wars in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century. It is against this background of general unsettlement and Muslim insecurity that we have to see the remarkable spread and growth of Islam among the Yoruba, Afenmai and others in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The Muslims along the coast received reinforcement from among the liberated slaves who came back to the country especially from about the second decade of the nineteenth century. Most of these returning emigrants, as they were generally called, were Christians; but some of them were also Muslims. They had a varied background. Some had been Muslims before they were taken into captivity; others became Muslims in Cuba or Brazil largely due to the influence of Hausa or Fulani slaves. And quite a

1. See Gbadamosi, T.G.O.: *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, forthcoming book based on his Ph.D. thesis (Ibadan, 1968).

number of them had been in Sierra Leone where, in spite of the strong Christian character of the colony, they had retained their religion, practising it as best they could in their unfavourable circumstances. On arrival, these returning Muslims settled in Lagos, Badagry, Otta, Ibadan and a few other places.

The home-coming of these 'overseas' Muslims proved advantageous and significant for the development of the Muslim community in the south-western part of Nigeria. They increased the numerical strength of the Muslim community especially in Lagos. More important was the calibre, experience and knowledge of these Muslim emigrants which compared well with that of their Christian counterparts. During their stay abroad, many of them had acquired some skills such as in masonry, carpentry, tailoring, baking, and had become relatively wealthy. Such independent and respected Muslims in no small way helped to raise the status of Islam from the lowly and despised position into which it had been thrown. Their experience abroad meant that they were to some extent familiar with European ways and methods. From the early 1820s onwards, they served as a bridgehead for the diffusion of European ideas and western education among their co-religionists.

In the hinterland, the position of Islam was also undergoing perceptible changes. As the society became more stabilised, and people re-established their destroyed towns and cities, the Muslims began to reconstitute themselves into Islamic communities. Open-air places were secured for congregational prayers and, wherever possible, mosques were built. A few elders among them were given offices, and with some skeletal organisations, the Muslims conducted their affairs. Their spiritual nurture came essentially from the itinerant priests from the Northern centres of Islam, some from as far away as Kano or Borno. The bulk of the teachers and preachers, however, were from Ilorin which, for much of the second half of the nineteenth century, became the southern Islamic lighthouse for Yoruba Muslims.

Islam was thus quickly revived in the Yoruba south-west. It expanded fast, first in the major urban centres and from them to the neighbouring towns and villages. This process of diffusion was accelerated by the fact that the major towns were pace-setters and they normally had a very close relationship with the surrounding district. Sometimes the expansion was accidental as in the exile of Kosoko to Epe. The Muslim community in Lagos had steadily grown, thanks to the influence of both the "overseas" and the hinterland Muslims who swelled the Muslim ranks and raised the quality of Muslim life. Many of them were to be found in the retinue of Kosoko and, with his migration to Epe in 1851, the bulk of his Muslim followers brought Islam to Epe, and the religion spread there very fast. In this way, this major trading centre virtually became a Muslim town, and has remained an important southern centre from where Islam radiated to the surrounding district in the subsequent decades. Islam then continued to spread into various parts of the southwest and beyond, reaching through traders to places as distant as Onitsha and Calabar.

Many reasons have been given to explain this rapid expansion of the religion. These include the strategy of missionary agents who aimed at the conversion of whole families or community units rather than individuals; the support of many traditional rulers and chiefs; and the many-sided roles of the "mallam" as man of God, preacher, teacher, scholar, trader, adviser and medicine man. Still other explanations given are the pressure of Ilorin on the eastern parts of Yorubaland and Nupe on the area round

the Niger-Benue confluence and into Akoko and Afenmai. We may also stress the identification of Islam with the class of warriors and long distance traders, both very prestigious occupations in nineteenth century Yoruba society, and the prestige which this conferred on the Muslims, few as they were. We may also see the adoption of Islam as a measure of the extent to which the religion met the social, and spiritual needs of the people. It offered literacy, new ideas, a wider world concept, a richer civilisation and a new religion that did not imply subordination to the white men who were beginning to intrude into the life of the various communities.

### The Coming of Christianity

After some abortive attempts in the past, Christianity was at last successfully introduced into this country at this period.<sup>2</sup> In 1842, the first batch of Christian missionaries landed at Badagry, on their way to Abeokuta. They came in the wake of the liberated slaves returning home to Nigeria. Unlike the "overseas" Muslims some of whom were practising Muslims before their captivity, the Christians had all been converted during their period of captivity in Brazil or Cuba or after they were granted freedom there or in Sierra Leone. Their sponsors were anxious to see the liberated Africans engaged in some useful pursuits; and, indeed, some became gainfully employed in farming, trade or missionary work. For the greater number, however, success did not come so easily because opportunities were limited: farming land was scarce, and markets few. It was, therefore, necessary to consider other ways of utilising their newly acquired experience.

Thomas Fowell Buxton and others advocated that the Africans be returned to their country where they might all be engaged in agricultural development and evangelisation. The combined introduction of the Bible and the plough would usher in light and civilisation into the heart of the African continent. If unmoved by the idealism of Buxton, many liberated Africans were, at least, impressed by the idea of returning home to join their kith and kin. The missionaries and Sierra Leonean authorities, after an initial period of scepticism and indifference, became reconciled to these ideas. Thus began the mass movement of the liberated slaves back to their homes.

The first missionaries landed first at Badagry which they tried to make their base. They found the place unsatisfactory, for the loss of its former bustling slave trade had impoverished the town. The people were in no mood to receive Christianity and they offered the missionaries little cooperation. Missionaries therefore looked further afield and entered into negotiations with the authorities at Abeokuta, a new town under a dynamic leadership, struggling for survival, and seeking access to the sea. The Egba chiefs, in spite of the friendly disposition of Sodeke, their leader, hesitated and at first insisted in 1845 on keeping off the missionaries for the time being. But, they soon admitted the missionaries largely because they wanted their help in the political manœuvres against Lagos and other hostile neighbours. The missionaries were admitted in 1846 and they too soon began to paint a rosy picture of Abeokuta as their

2. Ajayi, J.F. Ade: *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891* Longmans, 1965; and Ayandele, E.A.: *The Missionary Impact on Nigeria*, Longmans, 1965.

These two have formed the sources of much that follow in this section.



main gateway into Yorubaland and regions beyond, the veritable "Sunrise within the Tropics."

The missionary efforts of Townsend, Crowther and Gollmer at Abeokuta yielded some early fruits. Schools and churches were built and on February 5, 1845 the first converts were baptised. The Methodists had also been active. They occupied a station at Ogbe, where Edward Bickerstetch, an Egba Sierra Leonean, remained the sole agent till 1859.

The return of the emigrants also resulted in the introduction of Christianity into various other Yoruba towns such as Lagos, Ibadan, Ijaiye, and some Christian presence in towns and villages as far away as Ede, Iragbiji and Ilorin. From these centres, Christianity filtered to other towns in Yorubaland in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the southeastern area, it was the Scottish missionaries who pioneered Christian evangelisation. Compared with the Anglican and Methodists in Yorubaland, Hope Waddell who arrived in Calabar in 1846 preferred a policy of concentrated evangelisation. He settled for Duke Town and Creek Town which were considered potentially Christian; and in preference to open air preaching, schools were introduced, and instruction provided within the compounds of the various Houses. The pace of development was slow, and it was only in 1853 that the first baptism was conducted. In 1857, they built a church, Waddell himself leaving in that year, and in September 1858 the Presbytery of the Bight of Biafra was established. This made it the earliest mission to give the local church some say in the management of its own affairs, though it was still subject to the supervision of the Foreign Mission Board.

The group of Christian converts swelled when the emigrants began to arrive in Calabar, settling mainly on the mission land at Duke Town. Some of these were Presbyterians, but most of the others were Methodists or Anglicans who had to attend the only available Presbyterian Church. The Anglicans began work in the Niger first at Abo, and more successfully at Onitsha in 1857, Brass in 1861 and Bonny in 1864. Generally, they made more rapid progress and afforded the trading communities of the Delta the opportunities of schools for training literate clerks.

### Christianity in the North

As regards the states of Northern Nigeria, the Christian missionaries at first entertained very high hopes of evangelisation, and their enthusiastic interest in this area was for a long time unabated. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the recurrent theme of the thought and plans of virtually all the Christian missions was how to evangelise this vast Muslim area of Nigeria.

The main pioneer of this enterprise was the Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther. His interest in missionary work among Hausa Muslims could be traced back to his contacts with the Hausa during the Niger Expeditions of 1841 and 1854. His evangelistic visions were shared by Dr. William Balfour Baikie who led the 1857 Expedition which employed a large number of intelligent young men from there to serve as interpreters and guides to the Expedition in its relationship with the rulers and peoples in the northern areas.

On becoming the head of the Niger Mission founded in 1857, Crowther had the opportunity to realise his long cherished ambitions. After a long period of patient

dealing, and persuasion, he apparently won the confidence of the Emir of Bida who was disposed to consider Crowther's missionary programme for the Nupe Kingdom. He was allowed to establish mission stations at two strategic caravan points; at Kippo Hill, on the trade route to the north, in 1875; and in 1876 at Shonga, on the caravan routes to both Sokoto and Salaga in the northwest. The Emir sent letters to his subordinate provincial officers, the Emirs of Nassarawa and Yola encouraging them to allow Crowther to begin missionary work in their territories. He himself gave a son to Crowther to educate, and later allowed him to open a mission at his capital, Bida. Invitations to open missions came later in 1893 from Kontagora, Nassarawa, etc. but this approach failed to win any converts.

By the close of the nineteenth century some imaginative Christians were already thinking of a new experiment. In 1890 a group of twelve missionaries known as the Sudan Party arrived at Lokoja under the leadership of Graham Wilmot Brooke. A young, energetic and courageous man, Brooke had since 1881 itched to evangelise Hausaland, reposing his confidence in an approach of "cultural surrender". He believed that wearing Muslim clothes including the turban, eating Hausa food and generally comporting himself like the Hausa, would facilitate conversion. He advocated that all European missionaries should study Hausa at least seven hours a day. These ideas were adopted with zeal by members of his party. At his suggestion, the Niger Mission which had been built up by Crowther was in 1890 purged of most of their African missionaries on the grounds that their adoption of European culture constituted an obstacle to evangelisation.

The Mission ran into deeper troubles. The Home Committee of the Church Missionary Society and the British Foreign Office viewed with disfavour the policy of cultural surrender. The indigenous people viewed his cultural gimmicks at best as preparatory to his own conversion and at worst as simply ludicrous. Four members resigned. Brooke himself fell a victim of black-water fever and died in March 1892, again with little to show by way of success.

In 1899, with the leave and financial support of the Home Committee, Bishop Tugwell headed a Mission to Hausaland. As members of the mission made a long tour of some parts of the north, they believed at first that the people regarded the advance of the British with favour. At Kano, the Emir had not been informed of their coming, and he accordingly ordered them out within three days. Their main achievement was the permission to settle in Girku, a town near Zaria. Here they built a mission house and a dispensary. Although this Girku mission was closed and burnt down in 1900, Walter Miller was allowed by Lugard to return there in 1902.

More missionary groups arrived later, but they thenceforth concentrated their attention on areas outside the core of Hausaland. In July 1906, the missionaries of the Cambridge University Missionary Party arrived in the Bauchi highlands. They had resolved to work in this area in close cooperation with the C.M.S. whose rules and regulations they pledged to obey. After the Sudan United Mission was formed in Edinburgh in June 1904, its missionaries such as Dr. Kumm, Messrs Bateman, Maxwell and Burt arrived and settled in Wukari in the Bauchi district. In 1905 American Quakers arrived at Lokoja and Wukari.

The high watermark of missionary work was reached when in July 1910, a conference of all missions in the northern states was held. This was the United

Missionary Conference with over seventeen missionaries representing at least seven bodies including the C.M.S., Sudan Interior Mission, C.U.M.P. and the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. It was the first time the agencies engaged in the evangelisation of the North gathered together to exchange ideas, discuss common problems, and decide on areas of cooperation and common action. This conference has remained a common feature of the subsequent history of Christianity in northern Nigeria.

The Christian achievement in terms of the number of converts, however, was small relative to the exertions of the missionaries. Up till 1910 there were only forty-five churches and about 650 pupils in mission schools in the northern parts of Nigeria. By contrast, there were 116 churches in Ijebu-Ode District alone and over 4,000 children in mission schools in Abeokuta. Although these raw figures do not indicate the quality of the faith practised by the converts, they probably serve as indicators of the numerical strength of the Christian Church.

The reasons for the limited success of Christianity in the north are not far to seek. As the British pressure on the Caliphate increased, the indigenous people increasingly regarded the missionaries with disfavour; and in certain places, like Lokoja and Garku, they attacked and expelled them as imperialist agents threatening the independence and security of their states. The colonial Government on occasions took a pro-Islamic attitude. Lugard stuck to his pledge to keep away Christians from the Muslim areas, and his successors, such as Percy Girouard and C.L. Temple, were more Lugardian in their decisive anti-missionary attitude. Respect for Islam, fear of a general Muslim rising and a strict and conservative interpretation of the indirect rule system would appear to have been influential in producing this strong anti-missionary pose of the Government.

Much of the answer also lies in the strategy of missionaries, who appeared to have made the cardinal mistake of posing as the liberators to the oppressed Hausa from Fulani hegemony. This hardened the attitude of the rulers and the loyalists against the missionaries whose activities were seen as subversive of the established system and order. But above all, there was the opposition of the people themselves. The Muslims had little need for Christianity. Islam which had become the official religion, supplied the laws, ethics and education that fitted people for their society. Consequently, while they could tolerate "ahl al-Kitab", they would not commit the heinous crime of apostasy or conversion from Islam to Christianity.

### **Interaction of Religions**

From the above, it can be seen that these world religions had spread into various parts of the country, Islam being more preponderant in the north and parts of the south-west, and Christianity more in the south than in the north. They confronted each other in many places, and today it is not uncommon to find both co-existing in the same families. We may therefore examine what their relationship was in the period under consideration, and what influences, if any, one had on the other.

The spread and establishment of Islam in the country became a matter of considerable concern to Christian evangelists. In the north, as noted above, Christian missionaries were check-mated or frustrated as much by the pro-Islamic attitude of the Government as by the indifferent, superior or hostile attitude of the confirmed Muslims. Right under the nose of the Christian missionaries, Islam was gaining more

ground, even in the south-west. The Christian missions therefore became very much concerned all the more so as their conversions in the field were, by their own estimates, in inverse proportion to their endeavours and relatively insignificant compared with those of their Muslim counterparts.

The Christian agency that felt this most keenly was the Church Missionary Society, the oldest, easily the largest and most widely dispersed Christian group in the country, and the one closest to the colonial administration. And their reaction illustrates best the competition which the Christian mission launched against the spread of Islam.

In the south-west, it was Reverend James Johnson who spearheaded the Christian offensive. In 1875 he submitted a plan which has since formed the basis of the Christian challenge to Muslim advance. First, local ministers should serve more as missionaries than as administrative pastors. The local clergy should learn and be trained in Arabic in order to be better equipped to combat Muslim apologists. As a corollary to this, tracts of Christian religious literature for the Muslim population should be produced in Arabic and Yoruba. Above all, religious indoctrination must be tried out on the Muslims in Christian schools, or, as he put it, "our desire is to get as much as we can of our religion into Mohammedan scholars before they leave school". The major diocesan meetings of the C.M.S. such as those in 1896, 1902 and 1908, upheld these ideas; and the essential elements of the Christian challenge therefore lay, in short, in greater evangelisation, trained clergy, literacy in English and production of Christian literature.

Ardent missionaries were not lacking for the work of intensified and concentrated propagation of the faith among the Muslims in the south. There were the older missionaries such as Crowther and James Johnson; but the field was also alive with younger, enterprising and tireless men like G.B. Foster, R.S. Oyeboade, and A.W. Smith. Wherever Muslims were to be found, that was the place to find these Christian missionaries, and an opportunity was readily found for scriptural dissertation and prolonged theological discussion. The range of issues disputed was often wide and limitless; the nature of the virgin birth, the concept of God, the use of charms, fasting, polygamy, the role of Mohammed, manner of worship and so on. This often aroused much public interest, with supporters of both groups joining in, and sometimes forming subsidiary little debating groups. Such was the interest that open air dialogues were sometimes arranged, especially for the leaders and scholars. And one of the longest of these series of religious debates in the late 1960's was that between Alhaji Agosto and others with Reverend Foster and Bishop Howell in Lagos which lasted intermittently for over a year.

Keen evangelisation did not necessarily lead to large scale conversion of souls. Indeed, as might be expected, the most extremist evangelists only succeeded in generating an equally animated reaction from the challenged Muslims. "Our activity has provoked their own", Johnson later observed; "they were never warmer in the defence of their religion". Where possible, the Muslims, using their influence with the chiefs some of whom were Muslims, delayed or frustrated the establishment of Christian missions as happened in Iwo and Iseyin. Strong Muslim centres such as Iwo and Epe became the Christian despair, and had to be written off in 1908 as too difficult for Christian missionary work. As a result of this intensified disputation and preaching, the Muslims were further quickened to consolidate the faith of their



supporters. To this end, they undertook an intensive house to house campaign in some areas.

The training of a clergy versed in Arabic was dutifully undertaken especially in the C.M.S. Others taught themselves, under the guidance of Muslim scholars. As a result, a sizeable crop of men like the Reverend M. S. Cole, Reverend James Johnson, Reverend T.A.J. Ogunbiyi and Reverend M.T. Euler-Ajayi emerged, possessing some insight into Islamic theology. The influence of this group of men who are conversant with Arabic could be perceived less in open and wayside evangelism than in their literary activities. They formed the core of the Christian lettered men who began in Nigeria the tradition of translating and publishing Christian tracts which were especially meant for Muslims. Reverend T.A.J. Ogunbiyi produced *Asaro Kukurú* and its English version *Tracts for Mohammedans*. Others produced *Itan Momodu* a sketch of the life of the Holy Prophet. The Reverend M.S. Cole scored a major literacy achievement in producing the first Yoruba translation of the *Quran*.

Largely for financial reasons, only few copies of these works were printed. Even these the Muslims scorned, regarding them as prejudiced and perjured works. Consequently, they were more influential among the Christian laity than among the Muslims. However, they remain as commendable literary efforts summing up what leading Nigerian Christians thought of Nigerian Muslims and essential Muslim beliefs.

It was in the field of providing Western education that the Christian Missions offered the most potent challenge to the progress of Islam. All over the world, the village school has ever been the handmaid of the Christian missionary effort in the same way that the Muslim preacher has invariably made use of the Quranic or Raffia school for the dissemination of his religious views and knowledge. In Nigeria, perhaps the greatest missionary advocate in the nineteenth century of the use of schools for evangelisation was Ajayi Crowther. Its advantages seem obvious: schools were relatively inexpensive and yet attracted the interest of traders and rulers who sent their children or wards there to acquire new tools for commercial transactions and the parents themselves might thereby be drawn later towards religious instruction. Yet most of Crowther's contemporaries did not foresee the extent to which Christian education could become a major weapon not only for Christian evangelisation but also for meeting the Muslim challenge.

Initially, the Muslims themselves were generally averse to, and highly sceptical of, attending mission schools. Iwo Muslims unanimously rejected the idea of a Christian teacher. Iseyin Muslims, for all the exertions of the C.M.S. and Wesleyan missions over several decades, had only six of their children in the Christian school by 1893. James Johnson later observed that the Muslim have "shown no desire for the education that may be had at the mission schools". The Muslims were plied with earnest entreaties by missionaries and government functionaries alike, and the virtues of Western education were frequently dilated upon. But such was the Muslim opposition that even in predominantly Muslim Lagos, up till the end of the nineteenth century only about twelve per cent of the children attending schools were Muslim.

This antipathy of the Muslims towards Western education was quite understandable. They had their own traditional system of education which so far had served them admirably well. Their children could not easily combine the education of the Quranic school with that provided in the Christian school. Above all, they saw Christian-sponsored education as a shining mirage designed to entice Muslim children away



from the straight path of Islam. Religious indoctrination was inevitable in such schools, regardless of the legal educational provision that school children be not taught the principles of a religion against the wishes of their parents and guardians. Indeed, the real bugbear was conversion to Christianity, and it was the sceptre of apostasy that stiffened Muslim opposition.

But Muslim apathy soon had to succumb. There were the socio-economic pressures of the changing circumstances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gainful employment with the commercial houses and the growing agencies of the Government demanded such knowledge as could be acquired only in the mission schools. Moreover, the Government successfully encouraged the Muslims to take advantage of Western education when it built Government Muslim schools in Epe, Lagos and Badagry, where Islam was taught alongside such subjects as English, Geography and the traditional three R's. In this way, it was demonstrated that Western education could be obtained without running the risk of religious apostasy. This successful experiment in the disengagement of Western education from Christianity proved a major factor in the development of Islam in Nigeria.

There was a craze for what Bishop Oluwole aptly called "the mystery of letters". Muslim parents became less suspicious of Western education, even when this meant attendance at mission schools. As a result many Muslim youths accepted baptism often to the chagrin of their irritated or embarrassed parents. The Muslim community in Nigeria today could recount a long list of Muslims who had in this way been converted to Christianity, many of them now holding highly placed positions including some among the Christian clergy. In short, then, the most successful aspect of the Christian challenge was in the educational field.

The publicity and irritation which this issue generated should not be allowed to obscure other more salient issues in the interaction between the two religious systems. The long period of intense evangelisation, counter propagation, confrontation and incessant dialogue, left its mark on both communities. Some of the extremists remained bigoted and prejudiced. To the fanatical Christians, the Muslims were unyielding, and unwilling to accept the Christian "Grace of Light"; and the stricter Muslims gave up the other side as *Kiriyo* or *Kafirun*. But the greater tendency was to respect and appreciate some of the values, and methods of the other side. There was thus some exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Some of the Muslims who had received Western education later served as torch-bearers of the new civilisation among their co-religionists. The influence of this group was particularly noticeable in the first decades of the twentieth century when they founded various societies that were committed to providing Western education for the Muslim children within the context of Islam. It was this movement that has produced a significant proportion of the subsequent generations of the Muslim educated elite.

The Christians on their part came to appreciate more the values and methods of Islam in Nigeria. They realised that Islam was indigenous and independent. The Muslims practised self-help, and their self-reliant method of evangelisation with emphasis on the community began to be advocated within the Christian fold.

Indeed, it should be noted that in spite of the heated debates and even occasional flights of temper which featured in the rivalry between the two communities, there has on the whole been a remarkable measure of cooperation and toleration. There have

been no religious wars, or unduly prolonged religious rancour, though sharp differences might have occurred even between (and within) the Christian or Muslim fold. There are to be found in Nigeria today families in which Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists co-exist.

For all the concern which the Christian mission showed about the growth of Islam in the country, their major preoccupation lay in fostering the progress of Christianity among the "pagans", and ministering to the needs of their converts. Similarly, the Muslims were much more concerned about nurturing the Islamic communities and possibly winning more converts from worshippers of traditional religions. In dealing with this common adversary, Christians and Muslims had to face a host of practical problems, which involved them in similar clashes with officials of the British administration who tried to protect traditional institutions, as well as with the chiefs and other guardians of the traditional way of life.

There were of course no easy solutions to these problems. Although Christian missionaries came from various nations—America, France, Italy and so on,—the single largest group came from Britain. Their arrival in Nigeria was as much due to the support of their parent organisations as to the tacit if not explicit support of their national Government. Whenever they encountered any difficulty in the course of their evangelisation, therefore, they often appealed to their Government and fellow countrymen at home for support and sympathy. They appealed to the public at home for financial support and for moral pressure on a Government that was sometimes hesitant. The Government itself was often called upon to take decisive steps to ensure that their subjects were safe and respected in the foreign lands where they had risked all to usher in civilisation, culture and progress.

The missionaries themselves were needed by both the European traders and, in some cases, the colonial Government. As explorers, the missionaries furnished valuable information about trade routes, the attitudes and habits of the people, products of the land, and the latest developments in the country. They were trying to establish a way of life understood by those in Government, a civilisation symbolised by the Mission House with its gardens and style of architecture.

Mutual need, therefore, dictated a policy of close alliance between the missionaries and their national government. This was apparent from the outset in the way the missions became involved in the politics of Lagos and Badagry in the 1850's. The missionaries strongly urged Beecroft, the British Consul, to attack Lagos which they described as a slave depot under the rule of "the usurper" Kosoko. Beecroft adroitly manouvered the situation, and after installing Akitoye on the Lagos throne, secured his signature to a treaty guaranteeing British interest. But the interests of the missionaries were not forgotten and Article 8 of the Treaty demanded that "complete protection . . . and encouragement" shall be given to the Christian missionaries and ministers. The latter were not slow in seizing the opportunity so admirably offered. Missionaries and thousands of Christian emigrants moved in, those from Sierra Leone settling down at Olowogbowo, and those from Brazil around Campos Square.<sup>3</sup>

3. Sources here include Ayandele, E.A. *Missionary Impact on Nigeria*, chp. 4; "The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria," J.H.S.N. III, 3, December 1966, pp. 503-522.

The episode of 1851 underscores the role of the missionaries as pathfinders for the Colonial Government, and it was only the first in a series of similar actions in which Christian endeavours in Nigeria received the direct support of the British Government as at Ijebu, Oyo, Abeokuta, Calabar and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Missionary enterprise formed at least, one of the vital agencies that determined the process and pattern of British influence and penetration into the country.

There were, of course a few occasions when the Government did not heed Christian appeals for the armed support of the Government. Examples from the northern parts of Nigeria have already been cited. In Kano, Bishop Tugwell and his group had felt humiliated and insulted in 1906 by the Emir for the treatment which he gave them. But the Government refused to intervene.<sup>5</sup> Yet the ordinary farmer, trader or citizen regarded Christianity as the "white man's religion",<sup>6</sup> and this conferred on Christianity the advantage of considerable prestige and high status.

On the other hand, Muslim evangelists were not path-finders for foreign rule. Admittedly, they belonged to a religion new in many parts of the country and world-wide in its distribution, but they had no foreign government or parent association to which they could appeal. They had to rely on their own resources, using their tact and eloquence to resolve their missionary problems. At the end of the nineteenth century, the strong Muslim centres in the northern parts received indirect support from the Government, especially in the post-Lugardian era when the British Administration tried to restrict Christian enterprise only to be so-called "pagan areas". This was an unsolicited protection, and it is arguable, as subsequent events showed, that Islam probably did not require this support for its survival.

### Attitudes to Traditional Rulers

This factor of government or military support for missionary work had some significant effects on the attitude of the missionaries especially in their relationships with the traditional political authorities. It tended to produce among some Christian leaders the authoritarian, hectorian idealists of the type of Townsend, Brooke and Robinson. On the other hand, the Muslim leader who did not expect or reckon on such support was cast rather in the mould of the medicine man or teacher reminiscent of Uthman dan Fodio, Kokewukobere, or Alimi, operating within and under the wings of a family head or ruler.

In Islam, the believers accept that all political authorities hold their power by the leave of, and in trust for, God. They therefore, generally have to obey existing authorities so long as the latter do not oppose the practice of the faith. In the context of Nigeria in the nineteenth century, the Muslims seemed to have adhered to this traditional Islamic position rendering loyal services to all rulers who permitted the advocacy of Islam. In the Muslim emirates, where Islamic law was enforced, the unity

4. For a full discussion of the relationship between Christianity and Islam, see Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*; Chapters 4 and 5.

5. Gbadamosi, G.O., "The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926", J.H.S.N. iv, i. December 1967, pp. 89-114.

6. Ajayi, J.F. Ade: *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, chp. 3 & 4. Ayandele, E.A., *The Missionary Impact on Nigeria*, chp. 6 & 7.

of religion and state stood personified in the Muslim ruler, and there was no problem of loyalty for the Muslim subject. In other areas, the strict Muslim subject or missionary would, of course, abjure such practices of the non-Muslim authorities as went against his faith. But as Nigerian, indeed African, rulers often played their part as "fathers of all", private or even public practice of Islam was countenanced to the moderate satisfaction of Muslim leadership. Such rulers often needed the services of the Muslim servant, scholars and medicine man; and in these roles the Muslims must have had opportunities to get Islam further established not only in the citadels of power but also in the homes of leading families. In other words, while the Muslims stood opposed to pagan rituals of political offices, they accepted the valid rule of local authorities, gave them loyalty, and enjoyed their patronage: and often succeeded in converting them to Islam eventually. This was true as much for the pre-colonial as for the colonial era.<sup>7</sup>

This basic Muslim attitude of loyalty, service and eventual conversion was later advocated by some of the more perceptive Church leaders. Generally, however, the Christian agents together with their ardent converts were iconoclastic. They burned with zeal to abolish all what they described as "pagan" practices. Most of the evangelists had an inherent distrust for political authorities and they expected that all these evils would necessarily be swept away with the adoption of Christian ethics. The iconoclastic and radical ones might race into the chambers of religio-political institutions such as Ekpe Society of the Calabar violating all traditions and smashing sacred symbols like the drum. When the provoked authorities sought redress, and demanded an apology, the missionaries turned round to the Government to protect them and avenge "the insult to white integrity".<sup>8</sup> Less dramatic were the series of representations made to the local rulers to accept such minor reforms as forbidding Sunday markets or putting a ban on drumming near the churches. But there was generally no love lost between the mission and the traditional rulers who regarded the missionaries as imperial agents bent on undermining independent local authorities. A good number stuck inflexibly to their rites, and with their predilection to add wives to wives, the estrangement between rulers and missionaries grew. Eventually, the missionaries having failed to convert the rulers withdrew from the citadels of power into the Mission House. In other words, the missionaries eventually had to tolerate and accept local political authorities but their general attitude was one of withdrawal away from the rulers, and concentration on individual conversions of the subjects.

This attitude to political authorities was very much a part of the general attitude towards the entire religio-social systems in Nigeria especially in the colonial era. The basic objectives of the adherents of the two world religions remain essentially similar: the creation of a new society where the laws, and ethics of their religion would reign supreme. As religious visionaries and creators of a new order, they were in theory both disruptive of the traditional society. Some of the methods they adopted were strikingly similar. There was the same uncompromising denunciation of the use of sacrifices, ancestor worship, the worship of large panoply of gods and so on. And all over the

7. Compare the situation in Northern Ghana where the chiefs played a part in the spread of Islam. Levtzion: *Chiefs and Muslims in West Africa*, Oxford, 1968.

8. Ayandele, E.A.: *Missionary Impact on Nigeria*, chp. 2, elaborates further on this.

country, both Muslims and Christians eagerly made bonfires of images, and carvings much to the loss of antiquarians and lovers of African art. Indeed, all forms of pictorial representation were looked on with disfavour and secret societies forbidden by Muslims.

The differences of approach and methods were, however, more obvious. The Nigerian Muslim still had his feet firmly based in the society. He might wear the turban, but he was otherwise encouraged to wear his own traditional dress. He studied Arabic which he employed in prayers. But even certain aspects of his worship he conducted in his own language which in any case still remained the language of communication at all meetings. The Muslim songs were invariably his own. He remained a full member of the extended family, with Islam confirming his obligations to it. And, what is more, the *mallam* in his role as the diviner and medicine man satisfied his spiritual and metaphysical needs in a way reminiscent of the traditional herbalist and astrologist.

This "Africanness" of the Nigerian Muslim probably finds its best expression in the organisation of the Muslim community. All were treated as equal, and there was no occasion for any discrimination on the basis of race. Each Muslim community was independent and self-governing. While the community remained guided by its knowledge and experience of orthodox Islamic practice, it often drew freely on the practices of traditional society as regards social organisation. For example, among the Yoruba Muslims, while the Central Mosque remained the pivot of the organisation, local titles such as *Igba Keji*, *Eketa*, *Ekerin*, and *Balogun* were adopted. Even when accustomed foreign titles such as *Imam* and *Muezzin* were used, their functions, and conditions of service, were conditioned in no small measure by the accepted socio-political canons of the traditional society.

This indigenisation of Islam in Nigerian Society has enabled it to make an indelible imprint on the cultures of many Nigerians peoples. The languages of the Hausa, Nupe and Yoruba, for example, today contain many loan words from Arabic. Many Hausa and Yoruba sayings and proverbs allude to Muslim customs, practices and beliefs. Among the Yoruba, the *Ifa* corpus, a body of narrations given by the traditional *Ifa* diviner and priest, had by the nineteenth century incorporated verses alluding to Muslim priests, their dress and manner of life. Some verses even prescribed sacrifice to the Muslim God.<sup>9</sup> The food and music of the Hausa and Kanuri have been considerably influenced by Arab Muslims.<sup>10</sup> Islamisation of traditional culture evidently went on over several centuries and reached its peak in the Muslim areas of the north, where the Islamic contact was longest and most intimate. Marriage, inheritance, education and general world-view in those parts have become largely Islamic, and all traditional festivals, rituals and forms of worship had almost entirely vanished. But even among the Yoruba of the southwest where Islamic contact was more recent and less deep, the cultural impact by the end of the nineteenth century was already quite remarkable.

9. Abimbola, Wande: *Ifa*, Ph.D. 1970. chps. 2, 3 & 4. Gbadamosi, C.O.: *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, chp. 4.

10. Adamu, M.A.: "Some notes on the Influence of North African traders in Kano", a paper presented to the 14th Annual Conference of the Historical Society of Nigeria.



By contrast, Christianity did not appear to be making the same kind of impact on the cultures of the people who accepted the new religion. This was not only because it was relatively new, but even more because the Nigerian Christian found himself more divorced from his society than his Muslim counterpart. He was encouraged to become individualised, set apart from his extended family, and recognising only his wife and children. Enticed away from the practices of his "pagan" traditional society by the European missionary, he came to look down upon even his own language. He was made to strive after the acquisition of European civilisation in order to be properly accepted as a Christian. Many believed that converts who did not drink tea, or wear European clothes could not be genuine Christians. As late as the closing decades of the nineteenth century, anglicised Africans and evangelists lamented that converts were not seen eating, or having a walk, with their wives.

Perhaps the Europeanisation of the Christian converts would have continued if the Europeans were prepared to accept the misguided imitators, but they would not. They despised the mimicry; and educated converts saw themselves the laughing stock of all classes of Europeans including the missionaries. Bereft of roots in their own society and denied any standing in the European world, they found themselves in the pathetic position of individuals "stranded and floundering in the aggravating haze of semi-civilisation . . . They were like pictures in phantasmogoria".<sup>11</sup>

It was largely as a reaction against this process of unaccepted "de-Africanisation" that the Western-educated Christians swerved round to study, approve and cherish African customs and institutions. As the scales fell off their eyes, they proclaimed that indeed Christianity and European civilisation methods were separable, and protested against the denationalisation methods of the Christian missions. Indigenous institutions, whether social, religious or political, were found to be useful and valid even for Christians.

Their former attitude of hostility to local culture changed. They accepted the traditional institutions and were ready to reform rather than scrap them. Two examples would suffice. In the Niger Delta area, the educated converts began in the 1880s to join the *Owu-Ogbo*, the freemasonry of the Ijo, abolishing sacrifice and all forms of unchristianly practices. As soon as it was declared "altogether renovated", the missionaries began to persuade the cult, hitherto open only to free born, to accept slave converts. But more spectacular was the change in the attitude towards the *Ogboni*. This was an ancient Yoruba institution which was very powerful especially among the Egba and Ijebu. It wielded political powers, and served as the highest court of appeal, trying and executing criminals. It also had 'pagan' rituals employing carved images such as the *Edan* in the conclaves of the *Ogboni* House. By all appearances, it was a secret 'pagan' cult; and at the start, it had drawn forth the suspicion and condemnation of the Christians, European and African alike. In the upsurge of cultural nationalism among the formerly alienated African converts, however, this became a meaningful institution of considerable spiritual value. It only needed to be reformed and Christianised. A handful of converts such as Isaac O. Coker, Daddy Peters tried to found a Christian *Ogboni* Fraternity. This movement failed but it was the forerunner of the Christian *Ogboni* Society (later called Reformed *Ogboni* Fraternity) which the

11. Ayandele, E.A.: *Missionary Impact on Nigeria*, chp. 8. f.

Reverend T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, Reverend Euba and Dr. Obasa established in 1914. In spite of official Christian opposition, this fraternity spread in Lagos, Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ekiti, Ondo and Benin. By the middle of the twentieth century, there were over 120 conclaves in Nigeria. This society claimed to be a synthesis of Christianity and traditional religion. Only Christian prayers are offered before and after their meetings. Initiates kneel down at a place called *oju iku* (spot of death) and take oaths with a piece of kolanut dipped into human blood contained in the bowl on the hands of the carved image (*Edan*). A Bible was kept in a calabash (*opon epe* — 'wooden bowl of oaths'). The Reformed *Ogboni* Fraternity then remains an institution marking the high water mark of the cultural awakening of educated Christians, and perhaps represents the most dramatic institutional symbol of the impact of traditional society on Christianity in Nigeria.

### African Church Movement

But perhaps the most enduring result of the cultural awakening of the educated Christian converts was the emergence of the African Church movement.<sup>12</sup> This had developed slowly. At first, the educated Africans, in spite of all their acclamation of African culture, still tended to feel that the "African" Church was tribal and "pagan". They felt unable to break away from the orthodox Church to which they had been so long attached. The schisms which occurred early in the 1880s in the Presbyterian Church in Calabar, the Lagos Methodist Church and Lagos Baptist Church were soon resolved. But the tension and unrest remained between the frustrated Africans and the racist European Christians; and the contradictions remained between the social and religious values of indigenous society on the one hand and the foreign apparatus of the Christian Church on the other. The ultimate result was to be expected—the break-away of independent African Churches from every mission society in Lagos except the Roman Catholic Church. In 1888 the Native Baptist Church splintered off from the Southern American Baptist Mission; in 1891, the United Native African Church broke away from the Anglican Church.

The African Churches still kept to the essential elements of Christian doctrine, theology and liturgy but they accepted African names for baptism, and the use of African music in worship. More important was their indigenisation of Church organisation. Frustrated by the authoritarian rule of the clergy, many abolished the clerical hierarchy and instituted the rule of the laity. With regard to social institutions and practices, they were generally more permissive than the alien church; with a few exceptions, they were ready to accommodate the polygamists.

A further development of the African Church has been the appearance of the prophetic and messianic organisations such as the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Church of the Lord, and the Apostolic Church of Christ. These were even more attuned to provide within the framework of the Christian Church the divination, sacrifice and other forms of control of supernatural forces that traditional religion tried to give. Remaining fully independent, some of these churches have even tried to establish branches outside Nigeria in Dahomey, Ghana and Ivory Coast. Only recently, they announced their intention to build a centre in London.

12. Wester, J.B.: *The African Churches among the Yoruba*, Oxford, 1964.

The Messianic churches have developed a style and form distinctively theirs. Their ideas about doctrine and liturgy are not cluttered with the usual Christian imponderables, emphasising only the concept of God. They emphasise that through prayers, fasting and other spiritual exercises man can improve and develop himself, ridding himself of diseases and liberating himself from all evil forces.<sup>13</sup> They evolve their own mode of dress, liturgy, hymns, rules, regulations, and formulae in a way acceptable to large masses of the people. Often, the bulk of the members to whom they bring spiritual assistance and solace are the same who formally attend the more orthodox Churches for respectability and social status.

Although this reaction of the educated Christian converts to the process of extreme Europeanisation was undoubtedly strong, it was not without its parallels among Muslims. Both Muslims and Christians operate within the same traditional society which continued to exert an influence on the development of both religious systems. The rise of the African Church movement should be seen therefore, not only as marking a reaction against alien customs, but also as indicating the continued vitality of African traditions. The Muslims have, in a sense, always recognised this vitality in the way they incorporated elements of traditional society into the Islamic way of life. Nothing illustrates this better than the rise of indigenous societies among Nigerian Muslims.

It will be recalled that initially the Muslims had been organised on a communal level having the Central Mosque as its pivot, and following very much the traditional system of organisation. But the Muslims soon began to feel the limitations and inadequacies of this system for the purposes of social and religious development. As these needs became more urgent with the rapid economic and social developments taking place in the country, the Muslims began to organise themselves into Literary and Debating Societies. The societies encouraged development projects such as the building of schools and mosques among Muslims, as well as mutual aid to their members at the times of marriages, births, funerals, going on pilgrimage and so on. They were organised along the lines of traditional mutual aid societies and were not part of the central system of the Islamic community. Such societies have become a prominent feature of Nigerian Islam. Among the best known are the Ansar Ud Deen, the Nawar Ud Deen, the Ansar-Ul-Islam, Jamat Nas-Islam, Jamat Ul Islamiyya and Ijebu-Ode Muslim Mission. These societies like most of the African Churches remain orthodox in their belief; a few such as the Bandele Movement even emphasise the *purdah* for women. But they are all committed to providing spiritual and social satisfaction for their followers within an Islamic and traditional milieu.

### **Religion and Society**

The similarities as well as differences in the aims, methods and approaches of both religions are equally apparent in their activities and contributions to the society. It hardly needs be stressed that the contributions which the religions have made to the overall progress of the country have been tremendous, even if sometimes indirect and perhaps fortuitous. The chief concern of both religions has been the welfare of their

13. Turner, H.W.: *African Independent Church*, Oxford, 1967, vol. I, pp. 54-98.

members and in the end the services rendered to them have had a direct or cumulative effect on the society at large. This might also explain some of the limitations of their achievements.

A few of these achievements are peculiar to the circumstances of the religious group concerned. For example, largely because of its connection with the colonial government, the Church Missionary Society was well placed to play the role that it did in the settlement of the prolonged wars of the Yoruba.<sup>14</sup> Other contributions were shared in common. Both Islam and Christianity brought new patterns of life and worship. As purveyors of new cultures and civilisation, they added new dimensions to the cultural heritage of Nigerians. There was the study of oriental or European languages, a new form of education and culture, and new patterns of thought. New techniques of masonry and architecture were introduced as evident in the styles of chapels, cathedrals and central mosques in the country, and perhaps the best expressions of these are to be found in the Shitta Bay Mosque in Lagos, Kano Central Mosque, Lagos Holy Cross Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral in Lagos. Christianity preached the virtues of monogamy, Islam abstinence from alcohol and gambling.

Certain other aspects of missionary work deserve better recognition. One of such aspects on which current research is throwing some light is their contribution to the economic development of the country. The sponsors of Christian enterprise in the country had generally always emphasised the need for both missionaries and converts to engage in and promote some type of economic activity. Buxton was the advocate of the philosophy of the twin use of "the Bible and the Plough" in the regeneration of the country.<sup>15</sup> Although the failure of the 1841 Expedition officially discredited his theory, his idea had become widely known, and were developed by people like Venn, the General Secretary of the C.M.S.

Henry Venn formulated in the 1850's a policy of development which produced the skilled artisans upon which a middle class would depend. In pursuit of this, Venn encouraged cotton production in Abeokuta, attaining, for some years, a success which elicited the demands of other towns for a similar establishment in their areas. Also, an Industrial Institution was founded, teaching brickmaking, carpentry and other skills, and many were sent abroad for training in various vocations.<sup>16</sup>

The impetus provided by Venn was soon lost, not unexpectedly at a time when the Church was re-examining its position and methods and later became riddled with racism and pettiness. And it was only later that the issue of economic development was taken up, this time by almost all the missions. The society of African Missions concentrated at Topo, near Badagry, on coconut, the proceeds of which helped in the

14. Some of the notable works on this subjects are Johnson, S.: *History of the Yoruba; Ayandele*, E.A., "The Mode of British Occupation of Yorubaland: The Oyo Episode", *Odu*, III, 2, 1967.

15. Buxton, T.F., *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, London, 1840; Gallagher, J., "Fowell Buxton and the New African Policy, 1838-1842", *Cambridge History Jol.*, Vol. x, 1950.

16. Ifemesia, C.C. "The Civilising Mission of 1841", *J.H.S.N.* 2, 3, 1962, pp. 291-310.

17. Ajayi, J.F. Ade.: "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development", *J.H.S.N.* 1, 4, 1959, pp. 335-6.

18. Ajayi, J.F. Ade.: *Christian Mission in Nigeria*, chp. 3.



expansion of the mission.<sup>19</sup> At Agbowa in Ijebu Remo, vast acres of cocoa and Liberian coffee were grown by Agbowa Industrial Mission under Dr. Mojola Agbebi, and managed by J.E. Ricketts in concert with the Colwyn Bay Institute.<sup>20</sup> The cultivation of cocoa was encouraged on a large scale among Christians at Agege, Ondo, and Ibadan;<sup>21</sup> and the success of the vast cocoa plantations at Agege was in no small measure due to the imagination and sustained efforts of the African Church Movement.<sup>22</sup>

Christian economic activity went beyond encouragement of cash crops. Some industrial education was provided.<sup>23</sup> Under the patronage of the Anglican Mission in 1897, brickmaking flourished in Okorofiong in Calabar, meeting the large orders of the Government. In 1897-8 Industrial Institutions were opened by the C.M.S. at Brass and Onitsha, where masonry, carpentry and brickmaking were taught. In 1903, R.R. Blaize, perhaps the most industrially minded educated convert, established his Industrial Institute at Abeokuta, committing almost all his fortune to it. Probably the most elaborate of such institutes was The Hope Waddel Institute which was established by the Presbyterians in 1895. Besides providing facilities for teacher training and secondary education, it offered courses in blacksmithing, coopering, carpentry, masonry, and naval engineering; for girls, it had domestic science and dress making.

The missionaries of both religions exercised considerable impact on the society through the medical services they provided. The Muslim "afa" has for several decades been renowned all over the country for his "charms" and medicinal powers. To his patient, the "afa" offered his services single-handed from place to place; but in reality the *afa* consulted and cooperated with one another in the exchange of knowledge and techniques. It is only in recent times that certain Muslim organisations such as the Ahmadiya, the Ansar-Ud-Deen, and the Muslim Association of Nigeria have built or are planning to build health centres and clinics for use by the general public. The Christian medical effort has been more institutionalised. To cite a few examples, the C.M.S. maintained a hospital at Onitsha, the Baptist at Ogbomosho, the Wesleyans at Ilesha and the S.M.A. at Abeokuta. Confidence of the indigenous population still remained in the traditional herbalist and diviner, as well in the Muslim medicine man, and it is only in fairly recent times that the local population began to rely to a noticeable degree on the medical competence of the hospitals.

Also deserving of attention is the contribution of the religions to the intellectual development of the country. Apart from building schools and teacher training colleges, scholars of both religions wrote many works on the history and cultures of many Nigerian societies. There is the prodigious volume of works produced by the Sokoto Jihad scholars, dan Fodio, Bello and Abdullah. Among the most notable of their works are *Kitab al Farq*, *Infaq al Maysir*, *Wathiqat ahl Al-Sudan* and the *Tazyin*

19. Ayandele, E.A., *The Missionary Impact on Nigeria*, chap. 8.

20. Webster, J.B. "The Bible and the Plough", *J.H.S.N.*, 2, 4, 1963, pp. 418-434.

21. Berry, S.S. "Christianity and the Rise of Cocoa-Growing in Ibadan and Ondo", *J.H.S.N.*, 4, 3, 1968, pp. 435-452.

22. Webster, J.B., *op. cit.*

23. Ayandele, E.A. *op. cit.*



*Al-Waraqat*. Later there are good historical works such as *Kitab Tsoede* (on Nupe) *Amr Buba Yero* (Gombe), *Faya al Gadir* and *Taq yid al-Akhbar*, both on Kano. Many Christian literary men produced series of local histories. Some of the more valuable ones include J.A. Otuba Payne's *Lagos and West African Almanack* (1874), *Table of Principal Events in Yoruba History*, (1894), J.O. George's *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes* (1884 and 5), and the incomparable work, *History of the Yorubas* by Reverend Samuel Johnson.

The linguistic studies undertaken by the Christian missions yielded abundant fruit. Among the most notable works were, for example, T. Bowen, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*; MacIntyre's *Nupe Reader or Grammar*; Reverend S.W. Koelle's *Grammar of the Bornu or Kanuri Language* (1854), Schon's *Primer* (1857) and *Grammar of the Hausa Language* (1862); Dr. Miller's *Vocabulary of Hausa Grammar*; Hugh Goldie's *Principles of Efik Grammar and Specimens of the language* (1862), *Efik Dictionary* (1874) and *Efik Grammar in Efik* (1874) and *Efik Grammar in English* (1874).

With the mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of several Nigerian languages, the Christian literary men were able to translate many religious works into them. It was these pioneering works on Nigerian languages that made possible the beginning of a literary education. Religious works such as the Quoran, the Bible or the Catechism were therefore done into Yoruba, Hausa or Efik. Other works such as the *Pilgrims Progress* also began to be translated.

But perhaps the most laudable of the whole religious enterprise was the provision of a different and formal education. It is possible that no more than an elementary education was initially planned for the new convert who needed initiation to some basic teachings of the new faith. But as the educational appetites became whetted, it was the converts themselves who clamoured for more. And in Islam, for example, the result has been that many became versed in Arabic literature, Islamic law, Mathematics, and Religious Knowledge. The Christians brought western education and on their pioneering effort the educational system in the country has been built. They introduced not only elementary but also secondary, teacher training and technical schools. In their Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, they also brought elements of higher education within reach of their followers.

The Christians also introduced a variety of journals and magazines published by the Church. Magazines such as *African Church Gleaner*, *Nigerian Baptist* and the *African Church Chronicles* served as the media through which budding nationalists aired even their political views. Newspapers such as the *Lagos Weekly Record* acquired a wider circulation. And it can hardly be forgotten that it was among the first few generations of elite produced by the Christian Churches that were to be found the first crop of Nigerian nationalists. These early nationalists who included people like James Johnson and Dr Mojola Agbebi were advocating, if not specifically a Nigerian nation, an African nation free, Christian, independent and playing its proper role in the comity of nations.

As to nationalist political activities among Nigerian Muslims, this aspect has only just begun to receive the attention of research scholars,<sup>24</sup> and it is to be hoped that it

24. Olusanya, G.O., "Political Awakening in the North: A Re-Interpretation", J.H.S.N., 4, 1, 1967, pp. 125-134.

will receive greater consideration. In the Muslim North, for example, there was considerable political ferment in the period under review. There were civil wars and revolts such as the Kano Civil War and the Satiru Revolt. There was a large number of "Mahdist" appearances. The underlying ideas and social composition of factors present in these political activities are yet to be fully analysed to enable us see to what extent religion was a vehicle for the expression of political views. In the present state of our knowledge, however, one might possibly identify such factors as the conflict between the displaced dynasty and the Fulbe, the role of Arab settlers, and the appearance of a Mahdi as the harbinger of more prosperous millenia.

Last, but by no means the least, there is the undoubted moral and spiritual influence of these religions on the Society. In the history of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria cases of lapses could be cited *ad nauseam* among the laity and even ministers. Congregations have dwindled or even split on the issue of morality. Such aberrations should not obscure the spiritual and moral force for which both systems stand and which have more often been upheld than denied or abused. There have been fundamental contradictions between traditional morality and the new morality of the two religions. With the decline of the old gods who gave sanction to the traditional morality both Islam and Christianity have had to provide the basis of a new morality in Nigerian society. Both religions have developed institutions to encourage members to cultivate higher ideals and higher standards of morality. Among Christians, there are Bible Societies, Scripture Unions, Students Christian Movement, as well as various associations in the different churches. Perhaps the most important institution among Muslims in this regard is the Muslim brotherhood among which the *Quadriyya* and *Tijanniya* could be said to have dominated the Nigerian scene. In encouraging series of prayers, in their conduct of affairs, they would appear to have gone further than others in maintaining moral and spiritual standards. We can, therefore, probably say in conclusion that both the minaret and the mosque, the pulpit and the church have endeavoured to develop a new morality and maintain the moral tone of the Nigerian society.

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS WITH EUROPEANS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: EXPLORERS, MISSIONARIES AND TRADERS

E. A. AYANDELE

From the earliest times Nigerian peoples have been neither incorrigibly insular, nor irrationally impervious to external ideas and influences—whether those were cultural, ideological, religious, economic and political—nor have they been amateurishly unpractised in the art of neighbourliness. Even a casual perusal of the records would reveal in bold relief the judicious inclination of Nigerians to maintain harmonious relations with other peoples. Thus, far as they were geographically from the Gonjans, the Kanawa worked out commercial relations with this people in respect of kolanut, the Kanawa purchasing this favourite stimulant in Salaga and selling it across the Sahara. Similarly for more than three centuries the Nigerians on the Atlantic seaboard achieved amicable relations with European purchasers of human cargoes. Thus Ngazargamu, the second capital of Kanem-Borno—communicated with Tunis and Cairo on the friendliest of terms in the 16th and 17th centuries. Thus Arabs, Zaghawa and Fulani were allowed to sojourn for an indefinite period of time, or settle permanently as they might choose, in the Islamic zone of northern Nigeria. Thus Borno became the main supplier of eunuchs, a special kind of slave, to courts in Mediterranean Africa and the Levant. Thus Islam, a religion born outside Africa, was allowed existence for centuries in the northern areas of Nigeria. Thus Christianity, another religion from outside the continent, was allowed to exist for some time in the Kororofa empire, as well as in Benin and Warri. Thus literary education was patronized for centuries in some parts of the Niger-Benue and, to a much lesser extent, by a few individuals in the Niger Delta.

However, the keynote of pre-19th century external relations of Nigerian peoples was that these relations did not threaten to overthrow traditional politics and cultures. Alien peoples and ideas were treated with extreme caution. True, relations with alien peoples implied contact with alien cultures and ideas; true, society was not static but was changing all the time, heralding changes that involved some borrowing from outside. However, culture and ideas were borrowed, and modified, only after these had been tested and their relevance to the interest and aspirations of society had been assessed.

The intrusion of the whiteman into Nigerian society in the 19th century was a new experience for peoples beyond the coast. Caught by surprise and mystified that there were peoples with pigmentation different from that of Africans, many Nigerian

communities initially doubted the whiteman's humanity and had deep-rooted distrust for him. Thus the Ijebu and Hausa respectively believed that the whiteman had been cursed to live "beyond the sea" and was a mermaid living in the sea; hence the pity lavished by Kukawa women on Oudney, that Providence had been unkind to him by assigning him the white skin; hence the belief among the Yoruba that the whiteman was a peeled man; hence the belief in Igboland in the early days of the whiteman's appearance that he had no toes.

By the end of the 19th century Nigerian communities were to realize that the wearer of white skin, whom they at first pitied and looked upon with contempt, was a superman who was bent on becoming their ruler. He came in three forms—as an explorer, a missionary and a trader—before he finally took over as the overlord. In his three forms he did not disclose his imperial motives but presented himself as a friend. Thus as an explorer he proclaimed that he was the Nigerian's best friend, wishing to have knowledge of the country's rivers and hills, or seeking more intensive and more direct commercial relations with the interior peoples. As a missionary he proclaimed that he alone knew God, through whom the whiteman had become superhuman—the maker of guns which could despatch death from a long distance, the sextant, the sundial, the umbrella, velvet cloths, looking glasses, chairs, wrist watches and houses standing on water (i.e., boats). As a trader he presented himself as a friend whose commercial aspirations were believed to be complementary to those of coastal Nigerians, a friend who respected the rulers, would not tamper with the culture of the people and who obeyed the instruction that he should live off the Nigerian coast. But finally the whiteman became the arrogant overlord who, having rattled the sabre, forced so-called treaties on conquered Nigerians and converted Nigerians to unwilling subjects and inferior citizens of the British empire.

The pattern of relations which emerged between Nigerian communities and the European intruders in the 19th century was not uniform in details throughout the country; the details varied from area to area, depending on such variables as geographical location and historical accidents. Thus the Niger Delta peoples, within reach of the gunboat, were the worst hit. They had no choice but to painfully accept the new order of things, under which the European intruders began to subvert indigenous culture, bully the rulers and interfere in purely political affairs. Thus Yorubaland became the biggest theatre of the whiteman's intrusion and intervention in the interior of Nigeria in the pre-Scramble era, thanks to their geographical proximity to the sea, the bitter inter-state and internecine wars they went on fighting, leading to large-scale sale of themselves across the Atlantic and the return of *Saro* elements to their fatherland. Thus the luckiest peoples in the interior were those situated north of the Niger-Benue, thanks to their remoteness from the sea and the anti-infidel prejudices that had been fostered in them for a long time by the Islamic religion.

### **Explorers**

The first set of European intruders into the interior were the so-called explorers, whose motives and the results of whose activities certainly went beyond mere exploration. For, as will be illustrated presently, not only were they potential imperialists; they also held moral, religious and political ideas, the partial application of which in the future



was to undermine the indigenous milieu they were constrained to respect during the early period of intrusion.

This is not the place to discuss the background to African exploration,<sup>1</sup> a big theme to which the attention of scholars is increasingly turning. It suffices to say that, whatever the motives of the explorers to Nigeria, their relations with Nigerians were of an excellent kind; that they behaved themselves, accepting Nigerian rulers as lords of the territory, having the power of life and death over them; that the law of self-preservation and elementary common sense dictated to the 'explorers' that Nigeria's cultural heritage should be respected; that they must integrate themselves in the Nigerian milieu in matters of diet and shelter; that they must be solicitous of the welfare of their hosts; that they must regard themselves as socially inferior to the rulers. Although the half a dozen explorers—from Mungo Park to Henrich Barth—were ceremonially practising Christians, none of them dared worship in public or cast aspersions on the religious systems of Nigerians. Although, again, all of them were subscribers to the cause of abolition and found slavery offensive to their notions of humanity, none of them dared pass adverse comments on the spot on this institution, or refuse the services of slaves.

The reaction of Nigerians to the explorers varied from place to place, depending largely on the prevailing local political situation, or what each ruler judged to be his paramount interest. However, by and large, Nigerian rulers were instinctively suspicious of the undeclared motives of the explorers. They could not believe that these white intruders were just hunters after geographical knowledge for its own sake; that they were not nurturing imperial ambitions. As it seemed to rulers and communities, why should any sane person be looking for topographical features and rivers, features and rivers that were not necessarily wonder-evoking, or even absent from the whiteman's country? Moreover, thanks to the knowledge which the Muslim rulers had had of the white infidel through their co-religionists in North Africa and the Middle East, the imperial ambition of Europeans was already known to many rulers in the Sokoto Caliphate. Hence the knowledge commonplace in Borno, that white infidels had taken over land from Indians and that the ultimate intention of the 'explorers' might be to treat Northern Nigeria like India. Hence the questions which Muhammed Bello asked Clapperton about the revolt of the Greeks (Christians) being supported by Christian Europe against the Sultan of Turkey. Hence the questions by the erudite Bello about the imperial activities of white people along the North African coast.<sup>2</sup>

And there can be no doubt that the suspicious instincts of Nigerian rulers and peoples about the real purpose of the intrusion of the 'explorers' were correct. Right from the formation of the African Association in 1788, with the ostensible intention of conducting purely scientific exploration of Africa, there had never been wanting individuals whose aim was clearly the economic exploitation of the continent, by force

1. For this theme see E.A. Ayandele *African Exploration and Human Understanding* (The Bicentennial Mungo Park Memorial Lecture delivered in Edinburgh University, 2 December 1971), Edinburgh, 1972.
2. Denham, and Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822, 1823 and 1824*, London, 1826, pp. 42, 47-49. See Clapperton's *Journal of Excursion* Appendix in this volume.



if need be. Other 'explorers', including Henreich Barth, pleaded that white settlers be sent to highlands north of the Niger-Benue. In the words of Gerhard Rohlfs, a German explorer to the Benue-Plateau about 1866:

May one of the Christian powers, using these advantages offered by nature, take possession of the Bauchi Plateau and colonize it with settlers from Europe under the protection of its arms! Here in the territory of the Hausa and Bolo Negroes, a great majority of whom are still pagans, and who despise the rule of the Moham-maden Fulanis, a strong barrier should be established against the continued spread of Islam. Islam fills its confessors with heartless contempt of the infidel heathen, with fanatical hatred of Christians. It is Islam which causes the outrageous man-hunts among the Negroes; it is Islam which makes it difficult for European travellers to penetrate into the interior.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless Nigerian rulers and peoples sought to use the explorers for personal or local interests. Attracted by the superior manufactured goods of Europe—iron-mongery, chains, textiles and particularly guns—rulers were able to appreciate the technological value of greater commercial relations with Europe, but on the basis and on terms of equality. It was on such terms that Clapperton, Oudney and Denham were received by El-Kanemi of Borno and Sultan Bello of Sokoto. In some cases Nigerian rulers asked the explorers to repair guns or watches, or give them charms that could increase their libido.

Many rulers did not hesitate to use the 'explorers' for political purposes, going to the extent of taking these intruders into confidence in respect of the affairs of their domains. Rulers like El-kanem of Borno did not hesitate to ask the intruders to help them in warfare against their very neighbours, whilst rulers like the Alafin Majidun of Oyo in the third decade of the 19th century sought to use Clapperton and the Lander brothers to restore law and order in his tottering empire.

Attitude to explorers had cultural aspects. Intensely proud of their culture, Nigerians were amused by what seemed to them odd about the white man's customs. Jocularly, they pitied the white man for his monogamous marriage system and made these explorers learn something of Nigerian culture through acrobatic displays, festivals and procedure for dispensation of justice.

Nil as the impact of the explorers was on the Nigerian stage the importance of their intrusion in Nigerian history should be grasped. Ideologically they were the *avant-garde* of the missionary, the trader and the soldier. By wishing the triumph of Christianity, death of Islam and abolition of the slave trade and slavery, the explorers prepared the way for the Christian missionary. By expostulating on the commercial and technological achievements of Europe to Nigerian rulers, the explorers increased the interests and avidity of Nigerians for greater economic relations with Europe. By advertising the economic potentialities of Nigeria to their countrymen in Europe officially, and through their publications, the explorers opened the eyes of empire-builders to the 'undeveloped estate' of Nigeria.

3. Quoted in R. T. Rotberg (ed.) *Africa and Its Explorers*, Cambridge and London, 1970, p. 194.

Missionaries<sup>4</sup>

In the 19th century Nigeria was a fertile ground for Christian missions, most of which had been founded in Europe and America towards the end of the 18th century. They came from Britain, France and the United States with the grandiose dream of sweeping through the country, including the Sokoto Caliphate, in a matter of years. Ever before many of the pioneer missionaries set foot on Nigerian soil they had wished out of existence African traditional religion, which they expected to collapse Jerichowise at the mere shouting of the gospel. And in the early days of their activities the pioneer missionaries expected an easy victory for the Cross over the Crescent. However their vision collapsed before the realities: only along the coast and lower Niger, within the reach of the gunboat, were Christian missions able to maintain their establishments with impunity; only in some parts of Yorubaland were they able to operate at all. The larger populations of southern Nigeria refused to patronize the religious intruders; northern Nigeria was practically beyond the pale of Christian activity.

Between 1842 and 1892 eight Christian missions were able to establish themselves in different parts of southern Nigeria. The Wesleyan Methodists, the first in point of time, confined themselves to the south-western quarter of Yorubaland, with their strength concentrated in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan; the Church Missionary Society, by far the largest, was the colossus in Yorubaland, with greater weight and influence in Abeokuta, Lagos, Ibadan, Ilesha; it monopolized the Niger Delta, minus Old Calabar, until 1892 and the Niger valley until 1885; the United Presbyterians from Scotland concentrated effort in Old Calabar with the Cross River valley as their sphere of influence; the Southern American Baptists, again, found strength in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ogbomosho, the Qua Iboe from Protestant Ireland, established themselves along the Qua Iboe River in 1887; five years later the Primitive Methodists started work in Oron, among the Ibibio. Two Roman Catholic missions found it easy to establish themselves in Nigeria, notwithstanding the fact that the pioneers were French. The Society of African Missions, which by the sixties had had a strong establishment in Lagos, moved into Abeokuta in 1880, Oyo in 1885 and Ibadan ten years later; in 1888 it began work in Asaba, with the ambition of working west of the Niger towards Yorubaland. In 1885 the Society of Holy Ghost Fathers, with strength from Ireland, which was to be the greatest and most successful evangelizing mission among the Igbo, arrived on the Niger.

Although the Nigerian initiators of the advent of Christianity were eventually to regret the invitation sent to missionaries, the reasons for, and circumstances of, the original invitation should be clearly grasped. They never envisaged, nor bargained for, the bitter type of relations that evolved. But for the civil war which honeycombed the Yoruba nation in the 19th century, missionary enterprise would not have found a place in the interior of the country in the pre-Scramble era. However the civil war, particularly the Owu War (1818-24), which created a very large number of *Saro*, led the latter to urge missionaries to go to Abeokuta, the capital of the Egba Yoruba and

4. For a detailed treatment of the relations between Nigerian peoples and missionaries in the pre-Scramble era of E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1843-1914: A Political and social analysis*, London, 1966, chapters 1, 2 & 3.

led the Egba to expect military and political aid from the British, not only against Dahomey but against other Yoruba groups as well. As Sodeke, the leader of the Egba of Abeokuta, told T.B. Freeman, the Methodist pioneer of missionary enterprise in Yorubaland, "My people (the Saro) told me they were sure their friends in England would not neglect them; but I feared they would not come so far. Now I see you, and my heart rejoices; and as you have come to visit us, I hope the English will never leave us".<sup>5</sup>

As is abundantly revealed in the documents, the Egba welcomed the *Saro* and the missionaries clearly with the hope that the British would thereby become a political asset. Hence no opportunity was lost by the Egba to foster anti-Kosoko feelings or anti-Dahomean or anti-Ibadan feelings. Thus on 14 January 1851, at a meeting with them and the missionaries, the Egba summarized their grievance to Consul Beecroft who, in reporting it, wrote:

The substance of their reply was, all what the Queen should say to them, they would obey, they were originally no slave dealers, their fathers were harmless farmers, growing cotton, indigo, pepper, ginger and other produce, for they were driven away from their homes; they particularly pointed to Lagos as the root and seat of all evils which have come to this country, and urged the necessity of wresting the Slave Trade from that focus, then all would turn their attention to agriculture and lawful trade which they much desired. They moreover begged Consul to use his influence to prevent the Dahomeans from molesting them, because the king is ever menacing the destruction of their town; as they are surrounded by enemies, the Dahomeans in the west and the Ijebus in the east they could not safely enter into agricultural pursuits.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the Egba expected primarily political advantages from missionaries, the Niger Delta peoples looked for economic gains from the religious intruders. In the hope that literary education, with emphasis on commerce and accounting, would promote their economic relations with the whiteman's world, Eyamba V of Duke Town, Eyo Honesty II of Creek Town and George Pepple I of Bonny applied for mission establishments in the forties. In 1846 Old Calabar had missionaries, but Bonny had to wait until 1864, Brass until 1868, New Calabar till 1874, and Okrika till 1880. George Pepple's importunity and generous terms were typical in the Niger Delta and were a contrast to the situation in Yorubaland and other parts of the country. Twice in 1848 he appealed to the United Presbyterian Mission, offering to pay handsomely for the education of the children. Twelve years later he offered to pay any missionary that body might send a salary of £1,000 a year, that is more than three times the wages of a married missionary at that time in Old Calabar.

But not all southern Nigerian rulers and peoples were prepared to flirt at all with Christian missionaries. The Edo, the Igbo, King Jaja of Opobo, Olomu of the Itsekiri and the Yoruba Ijebu would have nothing to do with a set of uninvited aliens of whom they were intensely suspicious.

First the Edo. Long before the 19th century the Obas of Benin had discerned the political danger of the missionary and had on this account restricted and controlled

5. Methodist Missionary Archives London (M.M.A. henceforth) T.B. Freeman "Typescript", p. 368.

6. CMS (London Archives) CA2/031 Samuel Crowther *Journals* Entry for 14 January 1851.

dialogue with Portugal.<sup>7</sup> Even commercial advantages with the white man were not considered at the expense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Benin. Consequently no whiteman was allowed to sojourn in the Edo kingdom and commercial relations were consolidated at Gwato, where the Oba had his representative. Of course, there was no question of the Edo welcoming back emigrants of Benin origin at all.

As for the Igbo they were the most inland of the large ethnic groups in 19th century southern Nigeria. Although mission stations dotted the banks of the lower Niger, there never was a question of the Igbo inhabitants embracing Christianity; not a single convert was made for a generation by the CMS Niger Mission which Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther had established in 1857. In Onitsha, Christian adherents—the Saro—were persecuted and fined because their dress appeared to imitate that of the *Mmo*, the masqueraders of the secret cult which was the executive of Onitsha government. The Christians of the mission station dared not venture far beyond the strangers' quarters. As late as 1880 the CMS had not moved near Obosi, only five miles away from Onitsha; knowledge of the interior east of the Niger remained rather sketchy. Even west of the river no mission foray could be made by the CMS. Thus among the Itsekiri, Olomu, father of the famous Nana, swore that he would never allow a Christian establishment for fear that it would spoil Itsekiri customs. In Akassa not a single convert was made among the Ijo and but for the pressure from the Saro at Akassa the Bishop would have folded up the station in 1876. Stupefied by the overwhelming unresponsiveness of the lower Niger peoples to Christianity, a consul remarked:

The natives of the lower Niger as far as Oko, just below Onitsha, are very savage and untamable at present . . . They are at present the lowest class of cannibals and thoroughly steeped in ignorance and superstition, believing in fetish and making Human sacrifice of slaves at the slightest pretext.<sup>8</sup>

But whilst the Edo did not absolutely outlaw the whiteman and the Niger Igbo were not intolerant of the sight of white skin, the Ijebu had the worst view of the white man, and his person in Ijebuland was prohibited whether he be a trader or a missionary or a British official. In the Ijebu view the whiteman was created inferior to the African and was labelled by Obanta, their great hero, as the greatest enemy of Ijebuland with whom no direct or cordial relations should be sought. Thus they were prepared to have commercial dealings with the whiteman, but such dealings must not take place within Ijebuland. When in 1859 two white merchants appeared in Ijebu-Ode the chiefs and people, in the words of Consul Campbell, "appeared horrified at the presence of white men in their country, and sacrifices of goats, dogs, fowls, etc. were made at Ode, and at all the villages through which the mission passed, to avert the evil it was feared the white man's presence in their country may give rise to".<sup>9</sup> And there was no question of the Ijebu treating whitemen as equals. Hence the fact that the latter were never

7. A.F.C. Ryder, "The Benin Missions", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, No. 2, December, 1961.

8. F.O. 84/1487 H. Tait to Derby, 30 September 1877.

9. P.P. 1860 LXX (Africa Consular) Consul Campbell to Earl of Malmesbury, 22 March 1859.



presented with seats to sit upon at interviews; hence the fact that they were compelled to purchase water to drink. Indeed the Awujale swore that he would never defile himself by shaking hands with a whiteman. When in 1852 Awujale Ademiyewo learned that in the so-called treaty made with the British in that year white people should be allowed to reside in Ijebuland and be protected by him, he protested: "Hitherto, I have not understood the treaty having had nobody to read and explain it to me. And now that it has been read, I do not see how I can agree to allow a white man missionary to come and stay in our country much more to protect him; for our Ancestors never handed it down to us, that a white man ever lived among them. Trade is all we want and we are satisfied. We do not want fighting, but if we are attacked in our country, we will defend ourselves".<sup>10</sup>

However, from the Ijebu viewpoint, the worst whiteman was the missionary whom the Ijebu knew through Kosoko as the brother of the Consul and of the naval officer who could force a ruler to flee his domain. For Kosoko was fully aware of the patronage which his rival, Akitoye, had been receiving from missionaries since 1845 as the people who could restore him to the throne of his fathers. Such a promise, which missionaries had given years before 1851, was completely fulfilled in December 1851 when Lagos was bombarded, Kosoko deposed and Akitoye restored to the Lagos stool. And hardly had this event, which in Ijebu opinion was terrible, occurred than missionaries installed themselves on the island of Lagos. Kosoko, who found refuge in Ijebuland, educated the Awujale on the political danger posed by the missionary. Consequently all the effort made by missionaries to introduce Christianity into Ijebuland between 1852 and 1888 was vetoed by the Awujale.

And the political and social accompaniment of missionary enterprise in Abeokuta and Lagos were manifestations that confirmed the worst fears of the Ijebu. For the Ijebu had refused to allow Saro of Ijebu origins to settle themselves in Ijebuland. These Saro, in the belief of the Ijebu, had disqualified themselves as citizens by abandoning the traditional religion, by donning European clothes and shoes, by wearing beards and by becoming literate. In view of the unpleasant manifestations of missionary activity in other parts of Yorubaland, the Ijebu became the most relentless preachers of the danger of dealing with missionaries to the Egba, the Ondo and Ibadan. According to British sources, the Ijebu were the instigators of the *Ifole* of 1867 and they sent messages to Ibadan to imitate the Egba. According to the records of Charles Phillips of Ondo, repeated messages were sent to the Ondo by the Ijebu, urging termination of patronage of missionaries in the Ondo territory.

But the Ijebu were not alone in southern Nigeria in their perception of the political and social danger of the missionary. In the Niger Delta, where the whiteman had been a friend for a long time as a trader, Jaja of Opobo became a relentless enemy of missionary enterprise. As early as 1864 he had watched with dismay that the first African agent put in Bonny by Bishop Crowther sexually defiled an Ijo girl. Throughout his life in Bonny he refused to have any dealing with the missionaries, nor would he allow any of his children to go to their school. And when he established his kingdom of Opobo and strengthened his relations with white traders, he kept the missionary out of the kingdom. Much as he appreciated the value of literary education, which he would

10. CMS CA2/07 Awujale to Captain Foote, 2 November 1852.



like to see flourish in Opobo without upsetting society, he refused to have missionaries whom, he believed, he would not be able to control. Bishop Ajayi Crowther, he had come to believe, was "a bad man" and the social and political convulsions in Bonny and other Niger Delta states had convinced him that the one whiteman who would prove more of a master than a servant was the missionary. He came to believe that even if he erected buildings, and paid fully the salary of missionaries, the latter's activities would undermine law and authority in his state. Hence the failure of the negotiations with the Reverend John Milum, Chairman of the Wesleyan Mission, whom he had asked to present a budget and design a plan for a storey building. In 1879 Jaja could not believe that John Milum was not a liar when the Wesleyan Methodist leader declared to him:

My object is two-fold. To preach Christianity to you and your people believing it to be the Greater power to raise and strengthen a people and as being the power which has made England and the European nations generally great and to educate your children so as to fit them to take high place in the advanced state of society which I hope will be found in the not distant future in your country. Our missionaries have nothing whatever to do with trading or politics and in every way keep aloof from all things likely to compromise them in their sacred calling.<sup>11</sup>

The fears of the Ijebu, the Edo and of rulers like Jaja, that missionaries and educated Nigerians were heralds of British imperialism were not entirely without foundation. For the Nigerian wards of missionaries and patrons of Western-style education were necessarily protégés of the British, sharers of British thought-patterns and enemies of the cultural heritage of Nigeria from which they had become alienated. Such educated Nigerians had greater respect for the whiteman than for fellow Nigerians, contempt for the unlettered, 'pagan' and materially unprivileged Nigerians; they knew the histories of Britain, Ancient Greece and Rome more than they knew of Nigeria and were covetous of the whiteman's life-style and patterns of government. In a sense they were conscious collaborators with the whiteman's spiritual, political, cultural and mental conquest of Nigeria. They had the vision of a Nigeria that would be literate, with a mixed but highly industrialized and capitalized economy, an administration that would be directed by the literate, a society that would sublimate individualism and be transformed by science and technology. Critical of contemporary Nigerian communities into which they could not move freely, except under ethnic laws, the educated élite deplored inter-ethnic warfare and wished for an administration that would be under the British flag. Hence the ecstatic delight with which Samuel Ajayi Crowther received the news of the bombardment of Lagos from which Samuel Ajayi Crowther received the news of the bombardment of Lagos from the distant Sierra Leone. The news was for him "the long wished for tidings", "the destruction of Lagos, the stronghold and secure rest of the slave trade in the Bight of Benin. The usurper fled into the bush . . . he has been a great plague to the whole nation . . . The English flag is now tying in Lagos".<sup>12</sup>

But even before the educated élite disciples of Christian missionaries began to think imperially in favour of Britain, the Egba and Niger Delta peoples had begun to regret

11. National Archives, Ibadan W.M.M.S. 1/6/1 John Milum to Jaja, 6 September, 1879.

12. CMS CA2/031 Samuel A. Crowther to Venn, 19 January 1852.

the political and social results of their flirtation with the missionaries. Whatever the political and educational advantages they had gained respectively, they discovered, painfully, had been bought at a very dear price indeed.

First the Egba. To their horror, the missionaries proved uncharitable, refusing to become votaries of indigenous religion. But to make matters worse missionaries began to ridicule traditional religion and sought to convert the Egba to Christianity. From the Egba view, as in the view of the Yoruba rulers and people who were not slaves, no respectable uncontaminated Yoruba would abandon his religion for the new faith brought by the whiteman. The Egba had no objection to the Saro becoming Christians, since these had become deEgbanized and were not considered worthy of Egba citizenship. Therefore every effort was made to warn the missionaries that religiously there could be no compromise with the whiteman. As Samuel Ajayi Crowther, later Bishop, recorded in the early days in Abeokuta about Egba converts put into chains by the chiefs:

The head chief of Itoku said he had no quarrel with us, neither with the Sierra Leone emigrants in his town, they might come to church and do as they pleased but he checked his people from doing so, because they must do as their fore-fathers used to do, and they have no business with us, they not being emigrants, he said moreover, that we never gave them any person to make Ogboni, nor to worship Ifa, nor Sango, etc. Moreover that one of us called the worship of their deceased fore-fathers a lie.<sup>13</sup>

Much as some Egba were grateful that their relations with missions gave them political advantages—such as frightening away Dahomeans and deterring the Ibadan and Ijebu from completing disintegration of the Egba nation—the majority began to feel from the 1860s onwards that their relations with the missions would end in the British flag flying over their heads. For to their horror the British summarily, with the threat of force, cancelled Nigerian sovereignty over Lagos, brushed Dosumu aside and installed a British administration there. In view of their knowledge of the exertions of missionaries in Lagos and the political use they themselves had made of missionaries, the Egba realized that they had to be on their guard against the political threat of the missionaries to their authority and sovereignty. When therefore in 1862 the British Government appointed a Vice-Consul to the Egba to facilitate “friendship” the Egba expelled him, thereby insulting “Our Gracious Sovereign”. The Saro, who called themselves British subjects, measured the effect of the British occupation of Lagos: thus “The English are everywhere suspected, instead of being honoured as before, and Lagos [meaning the British Government there] has not a friend among the Native tribes on its borders”. Intensified British activities would arouse “hatred and hostility to Christianity, civilization, and the white man”. Already the people had “indisposition . . . to receive Missionaries lest it should lead to political results”.<sup>14</sup>

The writing on the wall was seen by the British as well. As Governor H.S. Freeman put it: “They [Egba] well know that one of two things must happen; either the British Government will give up Lagos, or Lagos must gradually absorb the adjacent countries. It is a question which, in my mind, admits no manner of doubt . . . it is but

13. *ibid.* Same to same, 3 November 1849.

14. C.O. 147/4 British subjects in Abeokuta to Glover, 30 October 1863.

a question of time and the Egbas and their advisers, though they inwardly recognise the certainty, cannot or will not be persuaded that their opposition does but tend to accelerate the consummation".<sup>15</sup>

By 1862, then, the Egba, reputed throughout the world of mission supporters as the most zealous Christians in the interior of Africa, had become politically suspicious of the people they had earlier considered their best political allies. When therefore in 1867 the Egba were exasperated by the doings of the undisguisedly anti-Egba J.H. Glover, Governor of Lagos from 1865-72, their fury was visited on the white missionaries who were expelled and whose libraries were looted. But although white missionaries were not allowed into Abeokuta again for another thirteen years and African mission agents—Saro of Egba origins were, the Egba were soon to learn that the Saro were no less dangerous to Egba sovereignty than their white masters.

By 1880 the Egba were no longer under any illusion that the Saro were protégés of the British in Lagos and that religiously and socially the Saro had more in common with the British than with the mass of unlettered Egba. In several ways they had asserted their independence, to the point of influencing the choice of the Alake in 1869 and 1877. Under the influence of Henry Robin and G.W. Johnson, the Saro had attempted to introduce a constitution alien to the Egba. Little wonder that even anti-missionary G.W. Johnson was publicly disgraced in 1880 when he sprang upon the Egba a new flag on which was boldly imprinted the crown of the Queen of England.

From this time onwards the Egba changed their tactics in their relations with the missionaries. They now believed that the British and Protestants who had threatened Egba's independence and sovereignty so much required the threat of rival European party and Christian organization. Therefore the Egba authorities began to welcome French Catholic priests in 1880 to the consternation and dismay of British Protestants and their Saro wards.<sup>16</sup>

It is not to be thought that the Egba believed that by shifting friendship to the French and the Catholic priests they were not changing one imperial power for another. What seems clear is that the Egba authorities were so exasperated by the British and their Protestant Saro followers that they regarded the French Catholics as the lesser of two evils. For one thing the French priests did not have Saro equivalents of the British who had become a thorn in the side of the Egba. Secondly the French constituted no threat to Nigeria as yet. Thirdly so wicked the British seemed to the Egba that they considered the banning of guns to them by the British as a subtle conspiracy to allow Dahomey—still a real menace—to attack Egbaland. In these circumstances the Egba became enthusiastic in 1888 about a treaty which the French were keen on having, thanks to the exertions of Monsieur Viard and French Catholic priests.

But long before the Egba began to discover that their immediate political gains from patronage of Christian missions were being transformed into ultimate political disaster, the Niger Delta patrons of missionaries had learned with intense bitterness that the economic gains they had expected would elude them before they began to have results for which they had never bargained. In Old Calabar the sugarcane

15. C.O. 147/6 H.S. Freeman to Duke of Newcastle, 9 January 1864.

16. E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact et Seqq* pp. 49-54.

plantation which Eyo Honesty II expected never came, whilst in the other states elementary education had not reached a full course before the moral and social results of missionary activity began to turn their world upside down. For by and large, as in other parts of Nigeria where Christianity was preached, those who responded favourably to the preachings of missionaries were the slaves. But the slaves in the Niger Delta were of a different status from the Saro. Unlike the latter they were functionally full members of society, with clearly defined social, religious and economic functions without which society would be in chaos. When, therefore, the slaves embraced the new religion of Christianity, they began to make religious and social claims that confounded and shocked their masters, to the point that they would not even sell palm wine or deliver errands on Sundays to the chiefs. In Bonny and Brass, the missions encouraged the slave converts to a degree alarming to their masters, who feared that should there be physical confrontation the slaves, by far in the majority, might take over the control of affairs. The slave converts, who believed that they were spiritually superior to their masters, lost no time in winning religious independence, to the intense mortification of the chiefs. The slogan of Bonny chiefs, "that juju is the law of Bonny and all Bonny men are subject to it", gave way within a decade to public destruction of the kingdom's totem animal, the *Iguana*, the desertion of *ikuba*, the premier national shrine, and the grant of freedom of worship to the slave converts. In Old Calabar the assertiveness of the slaves was recognized and freedom of worship granted; Sunday marketing was abolished in some townships, the killing of twins suppressed and long confinement of widows considerably reduced. In New Calabar missionary activity was terminated within five years and the Christian adherents reabsorbed into the society. In Brass the slave converts staged a highly successful military coup.

In these circumstances in which the chiefs and masters of the slave converts found their authority rapidly diminishing, missionaries continued to flourish, thanks to the presence of the British navy and consuls whose physical capacity constituted more than an awe to the embittered rulers. Thus the Efik of Old Calabar found it impossible to organize an *Ifole*, in spite of the fact that by 1856 they had been exasperated to the point of wishing to see missionaries and Efik Saro withdraw themselves from Efikland. Bonny chiefs discovered, disconcertingly and painfully, that they must have back Archdeacon Dandeson Crowther whom they had outlawed, and that faraway Salisbury Square could censure them with effect and with impunity about their anti-Christianity measures and force down their throats British humanitarian concepts of slavery. The Kalabari discovered that to have smooth and harmonious relations with threatening British officials Christianity must be revived in New Calabar and Abonema. The Ijo people of Brass became enthusiastically grateful for the material advancement and increased social harmony that followed the victory of the Christian party in 1879.

It is clear from the foregoing that the pattern of relations which evolved between Nigerians and missionaries was different from that mentioned in respect of the explorers. The reasons for the difference were due partly to the peculiar characteristics of missionaries and the peculiarity of the mode and nature of their operations. Though confined to only a very small area they were comparatively larger in number than the explorers; they were certainly more than a hundred by the end of the 19th

century, and were destined to leave behind a legacy more permanent than that of the explorers.

Unlike the explorers who were all white and who were no more than visitors, missionaries were white and black, most of the latter having their roots in Nigeria. Moreover these missionaries were quasi-permanent sojourners (white) and returnees (African) determined to forge religious, political, economic and social relations with Nigerians. Unlike the non-ideological explorers, the missionaries were militant and obsessed propagators of ideologies. Unlike the explorers who were basically fact-gatherers and, consequently, better scientific students of the Nigerian communities in which they intruded, missionaries were importers of 'facts' which they hoped to plant in the Nigerian soil in place of the facts in the Nigerian milieu which they assumed they knew already, and which they condemned and hoped would be effaced within a very short time. The 'facts' which the missionaries imported were clear—the religion, Christianity, which in their view should be embraced by all mankind; the Bible, the sacred book which they believed emanated from God Himself and which every Nigerian must be able and eager to read; Hebrew or European names which were believed to be an outward evidence of the inner spiritual metamorphosis the convert wearer had undergone; the one-man one-wife marriage, said to be ordained by God, which should eliminate plurality of wives fostered by an allegedly depraved Nigerian society; burial in the bush rather than inside houses.

Again unlike the explorers, missionaries could not consider themselves socially at par with Nigerians to whom, they were convinced, they were infinitely superior. The missionary would not live under the same roof with the Nigerian. To this end, within months of his arrival in any community, he erected what seemed to the community a massive structure, far too big for an individual or a couple, a superior wonder-evoking architecture which rebuked the building of the rulers. And the furniture of his mansion was such that would have aroused the envy and covetousness of the community but for the suppression of these vices by the indigenous educational system. Of course, there was no question of the missionary seeing himself as a claimant of favours from the Nigerian rulers and people. Rather he saw himself as a dispenser of favours—spiritual and secular—which he was convinced Nigerians should appreciate and believe as in the interest of their country. Where the explorer had been cautious in his remarks about the cultural heritage of the country and had been submissive and differential to the rulers, the missionary was rash, regarding Nigeria's cultural heritage as the product of the devil and the rulers as spiritual and social inferiors.

Seen against the realities of the 19th century Nigerian milieu, the inevitability and logic of clashes between Nigerians and missionaries are self-evident. For the Nigerian communities who gave missionaries the permission to start work among them did not see themselves in the way missionaries saw them. They wanted the indigenous milieu preserved intact, in the cultural sense; they could not look upon the missionaries as spiritual benefactors, nor could they take kindly to the cultural innovations which missionaries were eager to make. For Nigerians not yet Islamised there was only one religion—and there could and should be only one—the indigenous religion, which they found absolutely satisfactory, which they would not like denounced, and to which they expected all Nigerians to subscribe; there was only one culture—the indigenous one, particularly with reference to marriage, burial, manners and codes of behaviour.



Little wonder that until the much latter part of the 19th century, when the sword of steel prepared the way for the sword of the spirit, the missionary achieved little cultural, religious and political result in the interior of Nigeria. The most casual contact with Islam in the Sokoto Caliphate warned off the infidels that the Crescent was beyond challenge. Even in Yorubaland where African traditional religion was pre-eminently triumphant the intruders discovered that no respectable Yoruba would embrace what was considered the whiteman's religion and that they, missionaries, were only tolerated. The authority of the rulers remained intact, an authority that could be flouted by the missionary only at his own peril. Missionaries were compelled to come to terms with the chiefs, whose goodwill was absolutely indispensable to ministration to their low-status followers, slaves or offspring of slaves. Indeed it was incumbent upon the missionaries to court the friendship of the chiefs, write letters for them when their literary skill was requested and make occasional gifts or loans to rulers.

There was no question of any missionary in the interior of Nigeria in the pre-scramble era behaving blantly politically as David Livingstone of the London Missionary Society was able to do among the Bekwanas or as John Mackenzie of the Central African Mission was able to do with impunity in Nyasaland (Malawi). Consequently the bitterness of missionaries at their monumental religious failure in the interior was more than a paper one. It was only in secret that the Reverend T.J. Bowen, who had made imaginary religious conquest of Nigeria before he arrived in Yorubaland, vituperated when he discovered that Yoruba divinities were more powerful than his zeal and that to preach against them would be "the act of sacrilege, of rebellion, and of anarchy and that the whole fury of the heathen soul would explode like gunpowder".<sup>17</sup> It was only in strict privacy that the Saro Reverend Charles Phillips expressed sorrow that the Ondo were only politically interested in his missionary activity and prayed that some national calamity would force this people to embrace Christianity.

### Traders

Were trade politically neutral, Nigerians and European traders would have found the commercial platform a common ground of mutual interest. For indirectly Nigerian peoples for centuries had had commercial links with Europe and the Levant (through caravans across the Sahara) and with Europe and the New World (through the middlemen on the Atlantic seaboard). However, from the first decade of the 19th century onwards, the economic interests of European traders began to diverge from those of Nigerian peoples, the Europeans imposing their own on the Nigerians. Firstly the Europeans unilaterally abolished the slave trade on which commercial relations had been built for centuries, and persuaded the Nigerians along the coast to produce sylvan products, particularly palm oil. Secondly, in order to promote their economic interests at the expense of what Nigerian peoples considered more vital national interests, the European traders began to interfere in the political affairs of the coastal peoples—the only set of Nigerians they could most easily subdue—through the invocation of naval or consular authority. Thirdly, the innovation of naval or consular

17. Ibadan University Library, *Bowen Papers* T.J. Bowen to J.B. Taylor 7 October 1851.

power increased rapidly as the century progressed, until the era of the Scramble when patriotic Nigerian rulers who stood for a sturdy independence were forcibly removed because their cause was an obstruction to the increasingly enlarging economic interests of the Europeans. Fourthly, the economic selfishness of white traders culminated in the activities of the Royal Niger Company, which began the process of the economic exploitation of Nigerian peoples in the most thoroughgoing fashion.

This is not to say that the European traders were a monolithic group, all members of which supported in principle or in practice the course or pattern of relations between the white traders and Nigerian peoples in the century. Indeed the evidence is that they did not concert their efforts at all times and that they often bickered among themselves. For instance, in the era of piecemeal abolition of the slave trade by European countries, the British traders favoured abolition whilst the Portuguese traded in slaves down to the middle of the century. In the sixties in the Niger Delta individual traders like Frenchman De Cardi and British M'Eachen disagreed with other European traders by supporting Jaja in the Bonny civil war and thereby encouraged Jaja to found his Opobo kingdom. On the Niger the four companies operating there in the seventies were involved in cut-throat competition, notwithstanding the fact that they were all British firms. Then the Liverpool traders along the delta coast were at war with the Royal Niger Company throughout the existence of the latter. And of course throughout the century there was John Holt who remained a rugged individualist, building his own personal empire. Even in the era of conquest the European traders were hardly unanimous in support of, or opposition to, the military expeditions that forced Nigerian peoples to open their country to British intruders.

European traders were however united at least, in one respect *vis-à-vis* their Nigerian counterparts; their trade was one-sided. At all times they dictated the commodities they wanted—for a long time palm oil—as well as the price they would pay; they also decided the rate of exchange European manufactured goods for the produce they purchased. And they spared no means to achieve their economic interests—persuasion, friendship, membership of native cults like *Ekpe* or *Egbo*, bullying, appeal to naval or consular power, interference in local politics through a policy of *divide et impera*, and the physical backing of protégés were all tried. And down to the end of the century it was the pliable Nigerian middlemen the Europeans used to buy produce in exchange for their manufactured products. As has been clearly revealed in several works, the only middlemen eliminated in the Scramble era by fire and sword were Nigerians—rulers or educated élite—who dared to challenge the one-sided economic policy of domination by Europeans.<sup>18</sup> For a long time primarily confined to ships off the Nigerian shore, except in Lagos and along the lower Niger banks, European traders were able to build up a commercial system and empire in which Nigerians were only incidental beneficiaries.

Until the last quarter of the century European traders focused attention directly on the coastal area. True, earlier in the century, indeed well into the middle of the century, exploration of economic prospects was conducted for the British in the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno by the so-called explorers in the guise of 'missions'; however none

18. J.C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1885-1906*, Cambridge, 1965, chapters 3 to 6.

O. Ikime, *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta*, Heinemann 1968.

of the 'missions' bore economic fruit, thanks to the political instincts of the rulers of that part of Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> But in the coastal areas, within easy reach of the whiteman's gunboats, commercial relations with the Europeans became a necessity and a source — in some areas like the Niger Delta city-states — the source — of livelihood.

In the first half of the 19th century the main emphasis of relations with European traders was the transition from the slave trade to 'legitimate' commerce. The main commodity involved in this enterprise was the palm oil trade, and as this aspect has been thoroughly examined by K.O. Dike and G.I. Jones,<sup>20</sup> our observations have to be confined to other aspects. Whilst it is true that before the establishment of consular administration by the British in 1849 European traders had interfered in local politics in order to promote their economic interest, it should be stated that, by and large, until about the middle of the 19th century the traders were apostles of the *status quo* and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs and culture of the coastal peoples. The traders did not see themselves as civilizers and as long as the middleman system worked in their interest, the European traders were not keen on selling their culture to Nigerian peoples. Whatever interference there was — and this there was to some extent in the first half of the 19th century — was no more than the use of persuasion to see that acceptable candidates occupied the Niger Delta thrones.

However, the advent of missionaries and the British consuls affected the disposition of the traders towards the cultural heritage and customs of the coastal peoples. Suddenly they, in concert with the secular officers and missionaries, began to wish some customs abolished. Thus in Old Calabar the traders pushed Eyo Honesty II to disassociate himself from the custom of using slaves instead of goats in burying free men.<sup>21</sup> In 1850 the traders joined hands with missionaries, using consular power, to put an end to human sacrifice in Old Calabar. In 1856, as Consul Hutchinson wrote to the supercargoes in Old Calabar about the all-powerful Egbo, should this masonic powerful machine of government interfere with the whiteman's commercial interest, appeals should be made to him, "for trading can never assure prosperity in any country, where such an abominable institution exists; and it is my duty to protect you from its evil influence".<sup>22</sup>

The reaction of the coastal Nigerians to the new aggressive interventionist and dictatorial attitude of the European traders varied according to geography and the skill of the white traders to exploit local rivalries. Thus traders like De Cardi, a French citizen and M'Eachen of the firm of Alexander Miller Brothers of Glasgow, reaped personal gains by supplying ammunition to the Annie Pepple faction in Bonny, whilst Isaac Watts, an Irish trader, was able to ingratiate himself with the Ibuno of the Qua Iboe valley by supporting them in their defiance of the Opobo. Reduced in economic as in political stature, Bonny — at one time the most prosperous 'city state' in the Niger

19. R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906* London, 1971, chapter 5.

20. K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*, Oxford, 1956.

G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, Oxford 1963.

21. P.R.O. (London) Adm. 1/5589 Commander A. Murray to Commodore C. Hotham, 24 March 1848, with enclosure.

22. P.P. 1857 Vol. XLIV Consul Hutchinson to Supercargoes of Old Calabar, 8 October 1856.

Delta—could do no more than protest about possible starvation if European traders carried out the threat to penetrate directly into what remained of their markets.

Whilst the Bonny Ijo had no alternative to verbal protestations, the Brass Ijo and peoples of the lower Niger used force against European traders who began to deprive them of their trade. In 1871 the Brassmen fired upon the hulk of the firm of Holland Jacques moored at the Nun River to prevent this firm from establishing itself there. Not long afterwards they turned back *Lord Nelson*, another steamer of the company. Particularly offensive to the Brassmen were the activities of the Miller Brothers of Glasgow which in 1872 entered Middleton, Osomare and Asaba—important markets of Brassmen—and put the *Sultan of Sokoto*, which was armed and protected against attack, on the Niger. In 1876 the Brassmen stretched across a hawser and fixed canons along the bushes. As soon as this boat came upon the hawser, volleys of cannonades were poured into her, killing one member of the crew and wounding eleven others.<sup>23</sup> Until 1879, notwithstanding gunboat punishment, the Brassmen continued to resist the intrusion of European traders into their traditional markets.

In the lower Niger and on the Benue the reaction of Nigerian peoples was more political than economic. The peoples resented disturbance of their world by a set of intruders who were regarded more as a liability than an asset. For the European or Saro agents of European firms often constituted a nuisance; whenever offended, their habit was to pillage the traders. As the rulers were masters in their own houses and as they were far from being easily attacked by the gunboat, irate chiefs found it easy to deal with traders by brandishing cutlasses, knives and muskets until huge compensation had been paid to them. Indeed in 1876 and 1879 Saro agents of European firms were killed in Onitsha and Yimaha respectively.<sup>24</sup>

However, both the Brassmen and the peoples on the lower Niger and Benue were not able to resist the intrusion and economic imperialism of Europeans much longer after 1879. For in 1879 the four British companies on the Niger amalgamated under the directorship of a ruthless Machiavellian dissolute unbeliever, George Taubman Goldie, who was determined to "paint Northern Nigeria red" and establish a commercial monopoly that would force other competitors out of the Niger trade and force the indigenous people to sell and buy at prices dictated by his amalgamated company.

The first victims of the amalgamated company were the rulers and peoples, who were forced to learn that they had in Goldie and his European agents *de facto* colonial masters. The new company would not placate the chiefs, nor advance credit to African producers; it was determined on forcing upon the states severe terms that would be harmful to Nigerian interests. The means adopted to achieve this end was force. In 1879, for instance, a misunderstanding between the merchants and Onitsha people resulted in the usual acts of plundering of the former. The traders had to flee to Asaba. The agent-general of the Niger Company, David Mackintosh, summoned the Acting Consul, S. F. Easton, to deal with Onitsha. The latter was taught a lesson which embittered its relations with the Niger Company for the rest of the century. H.M.S. *Pioneer* "levelled all the walls left standing in the Lower Town",<sup>25</sup> after burning it. In

23. CMS CA3/04 (a) Bishop Crowther to Hutchinson, 26 June 1876.

24. F.O. 84/1541 David Hopkins to F.O., 19 July 1879 & enclosures.

25. *ibid.* Easton to F.O., 3 November 1879.



November 1880 the town was blockaded by Mackintosh because the inhabitants refused to grant the Niger Company a monopoly against the French; the agent-general began to destroy Onitsha's fisheries. At the same time Atani and Asaba were subjected to similar treatment because they would not trade with the company on its own terms. In the chieftaincy dispute that arose in Gbebe the company, like Robert Clive in India, backed up a favourite to the disadvantage of the CMS mission established there in 1875. In 1882 a place on the Warri branch of the delta was bombarded. The following year Idah had its turn and in 1884 Jibu, on the Benue, suffered a similar fate.

The next set of victims of the monopolistic bid of the Niger Company were the Saro who were being squeezed out of the trade in the lower Niger. These 'British subjects' from Sierra Leone, Gold Coast and Lagos, had been originally Nigerians of Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe and Igbo origins. They took advantage of passages in the steamships of the four companies which dominated the trade prior to the 1879 amalgamation. They bartered Manchester goods for common articles of local manufacture such as cloths, mats, beads, shoes, sandals, pipes, lamps, calabashes and potash in which none of the larger companies were dealing. Prominent in this trade were members of the Crowther family. Joseph Crowther, one of the Bishop's sons, was the general agent for the West African Company while another son, Samuel, was the trading master for the same company; a daughter, Miss Macaulay, was trading between Lagos and the Nupe kingdom. Other prominent traders were R.B. Blaize, I.H. Willioughby, J.B. Haastrup and the Honourable C.J. George, an unofficial member of the Legislative Council, Lagos, from 1886 to 1906.

The Saro were not advocates of monopoly; they were apostles of free trade and were Western in taste and outlook. They were 'Christians' and 'black Englishmen' who saw themselves with the white traders and missionaries as co-civilizers of the indigenous inhabitants of the Niger basin. They never expected to be squeezed out of the Niger trade by the British. Free trade, they were convinced, was the key to the opening up of the Niger territories to Christianity, Commerce and Civilization; monopoly would be a danger to the progress of the peoples. Hence as early as 1871 Bishop Crowther had declared: "I feel persuaded that the God of Missions will not permit base self-interest and covetous desire to monopolize the trade of a country and people to obstruct the way to their christian evangelisation and enlightenment".<sup>26</sup>

Unlike the unlettered rulers who were easily subdued by force in the lower Niger, the educated elite participated in the Niger trade right to 1886 when the company obtained its charter. For one thing Goldie's company had every cause to be apprehensive of the Saro who were not only competitors but guardians and defenders of the interests of the Nigerian rulers. For instance, it was the influence of the Saro which foiled the attempt by the Niger Company in 1879 to obtain a ten-year monopoly from the Emir of Bida. Goldie desired their complete removal from the lower Niger. Responding to an appeal from the agent-general of the Niger Company, S.F. Easton, the Acting Consul (himself a trader) urged the Foreign Office to sanction the removal of all the educated Africans whom he described as "a gang of desperadoes" from the Niger. For their removal "cannot fail to prove beneficial in the extreme to the interests

26. C 26. CMS CA3/04 (a) Bishop Crowther to Venn, 17 June 1871.



of the European merchants and traders in the River".<sup>27</sup> He began the process of removal which was halted by his successor, Hewett. Since 1877 when the Kiriji War broke out in Yorubaland and began to have paralysing effects on Lagos trade, the Saro had put their own steamers on the river and began participating actively in the trade until 1885.

The Niger inhabitants, too profited from this trade with Lagos. A contemporary observer estimated that over two hundred of them took wares to Lagos every month.<sup>28</sup> Before 1886 the commercial effect of the educated Africans on the Niger brought to Lagos about ₦120,000 annually.<sup>29</sup>

By the time of the Charter in 1886 when the Niger Company became a quasi-governmental agency only one set of African competitors were left for Goldie's company to knock out of the Niger trade. These were the Brassmen. Of all the Niger basin peoples it was they who had every cause to regret their relations with the British, whom they had over-trusted, to the extent of embracing Christianity with a zest and sincerity they were to regret. From all accounts the Brassmen were the most humane group from the Ijo and they possessed an innate goodness conspicuously absent in their neighbours. For a keen observer as Sir H.H. Johnston, who knew the delta well, recorded that the Brass were a "good natured people".<sup>30</sup> When Richard Lander, the famous explorer, in 1830 was about to be sold into slavery by the Aboh Igbo, it was Brassmen who redeemed him, led him into their town, took good care of him, and led him to a boat at Akassa — all of which they did gratuitously.<sup>31</sup> In the Niger Delta they were the only people who, having signed a treaty with Britain to put an end to the slave trade, honestly stuck to the terms of the treaty, though they were the only ones who did not receive any indemnity.<sup>32</sup> And when the British officers and African missionaries pressed them to abandon their traditional religion, put an end to the persecution of Christians and embrace Christianity the Brass were the only Ijo people who heeded this advice. By 1879 the paramount ruler, King Ockiya, had thrown off the mask and had surrendered his gods which were exhibited in Britain by the CMS. The Brass embraced Christianity, having been persuaded to believe that religion and capitalism were cause and effect respectively.

The stupendous prosperity experienced in the seventies and early eighties was associated with Christianity.<sup>33</sup> In spite of competition from the white traders and educated elite in the lower Niger trade, the Brass not only held their own but dominated the markets from Onitsha down to the coast. Evidence shows that their traditional customers preferred them to the Niger Company before the latter received the Royal Charter that was to ruin the Brass people. Moreover the intense rivalry between the French and British traders was to the advantage of the Brass traders. So prosperous were they that they began building European-style houses and displaying

27. F.O. 84/1541 Easton to F.O., 3 November 1879.

28. C.O. 147/66 Moloney to Knutsford, 9 October 1888, lists 45 of those still alive.

29. *The Lagos Observer*, 21 May 1885.

30. H.H. Johnston, *The Story of my Life*, London, 1923, p. 200.

31. A. Tepowa, "The History of Brass and its People", *West African Mail*, 8 April 1904.

32. Comte de Cardi, Appendix I in M. Kingsley, *West African Studies* London, 1899, p. 470.

33. CMS, CA3/04(b) Garrick to Bishop Crowther, 29 December 1879.

their wealth in ornaments, prodigious graves, expensive and elaborate obsequies and European articles. Indeed it seemed the prosperity of Brass would last forever. Henry Johnson, later Archdeacon of the upper part of the Niger Mission, observed: "The prosperity of this station is not of a superficial or ephemeral character; there is substance in it, and as such with God's blessing will continually expand and become widespread".<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, at a time when European observers were doubting the quality of the Christianity professed by other Nigerians the Brass people received unique commendations. Thus the Reverend J.B. Wood wrote in 1880 of the Brass Christians: "All the chiefs—the masters of nearly all people—have in the good providence of God come under Christian influences; and the word would seem to have come to them and been heard by them as the word of God, and not of man".<sup>35</sup> He also noticed that they were missionaries in the interior markets "not hiding their light under the bushel". Cardi, for a long time a trader in the delta and one whose knowledge of Brass was unrivalled, commented that Brass women converts "were thoroughly imbued with the Christian religion and acted up to its teaching as conscientiously as their white sisters".<sup>36</sup> Then, lastly, Bishop Crowther described Chief Samuel Sambo, who died in 1890, as "a very pious, consistent, influential and exemplary member of the Brass church".<sup>37</sup> Of no other Christian groups in Nigeria could, and were, such glowing reports given in the 19th century.

Not only were Brassmen exemplary Christians, when compared with other Christian Nigerian groups but, in the observation of several people, they were also better Christians than the European and African employees of the Royal Niger Company. In 1885 Archdeacon J.H. Hamilton, Secretary of the Niger Mission, was displeased with the white officials "whose whole life, manner and conversation is totally opposed to the principles of the CMS"<sup>38</sup>, while Bishop Crowther found it difficult to understand their religious persuasion, "whether Atheism, Infidelity, Free-thinking, or Mormonism".<sup>39</sup> In juxtaposition to this irreligious exhibition of the European employees of the Niger Company was the religious energy of Brassmen, whose improvised chapels dotted the Niger from the coast to Onitsha. An educated African, who deplored the "ruinous competition" of the Brassmen in the Niger trade, had the following testimony to give of their Christianity: "One thing, however, may be justly said to their credit. They never traded in the Lord's day, and wherever there was a church, both masters and dependents would attend it on Sunday and worship God like good Christians. They were never ashamed to avow their religious conviction as alas many, far more civilized and enlightened too often are".<sup>40</sup>

These were the people, genuinely Christian and sanguinely hopeful that Christian ethics would govern relations with the British missionary, trader and officer. However, to their utter dismay and regret neither the missionary nor the trader nor the officer

34. CMS, CA3/023 H. Johnson to Hutchinson, 14 December 1877.

35. CMS, G3/A3/01 "Report of a visit to the Niger Mission" by J.B. Wood.

36. Comte de Cardi, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

37. CMS, G3/04 Bishop Crowther to Lang, 16 May 1890.

38. CMS, G3/A3/02 John Burness to Lang, 12 January 1885, quotes Hamilton.

39. CMS, CA3/04(b) Annual Report for 1875.

40. *Lagos Times*, 22 March 1882.

was prepared to apply Christian ethics in his relations with the Brass people where the imperial interest of Britain was concerned. The Brass hardly believed their eyes as they were being gradually deprived of their markets by the Niger Company, with the undisguised approval of the white missionaries. As early as 1884 the Brassmen had expressed their apprehensions about the Niger Company and had refused to sign a treaty of 'protection' with the British, unless Consul Hewett would promise to restore their markets. All that this Consul could wrench from them was a treaty for one month only. It was not until 1886 that they finally signed a permanent treaty, and that after vague promises had been given to calm their fears. Since they were 'good natured', they did not insist, as other delta states did, that trade should not be free for all, Europeans and Africans. They made it clear that all they desired was unrestricted access to their former markets, on equal terms with the company.

Trouble began when the Niger Company began to issue discriminatory regulations in the name of the Royal Charter. Their position began to deteriorate. For a year or so no great difference was observed until 1888 when territorial incursion by the company upon the immediate hinterland of the Brassmen actually began. Gradually, and at last decisively, the power of the Charter was felt in the Brass country. Their market was curtailed until by 1895, as an educated Brassman put it, the Company also "asserted that all creeks four miles off were within its territorial boundary".<sup>41</sup> The effect of this frontier was to divide the Brass people into two. In order to make the split effective, the company forbade the Brassmen within its territory from exporting any provisions to their fellow tribesmen on the coast and hounded those who violated this regulation into its prison at Asaba. It appeared to the Brass people that the company was determined "to extirpate a whole tribe by torture — slow death — or starvation".<sup>42</sup>

In the light of the emasculating policy of the Royal Niger Company the Brass people began to have second thoughts on their patronage of the Christian religion. As far as they were concerned Bishop Crowther and Goldie were the creators of their debacle. They began to complain that Bishop Crowther was responsible for the spoiling of their trade and that, therefore, they would have nothing to do with the Church any longer. They believed that missionaries could, and should, restore their markets to them. They could not make any distinction between the missionaries and the company. As they expressed: "You be all white people, you missionary preach one thing and the Company do the other".<sup>43</sup>

The Brassmen began to assess their relations with the company in terms of Christian ethics and expected their erstwhile Christian teachers to do the same. In their view it was inconceivable that Christian Britain should ever tolerate such an embodiment of "iniquity, oppression and injustice" as the Niger Company. They asked the following questions: How could the Company justify its administration when it had no provision for the education of the people over whom it claimed it was ruling? Why did the Company make no provision for the edification of the souls of its servants, which provision, they contended, would have prevented "the prevalence of the most terrible

41. 'Zala Native', "The Brass Grievances against the R.N.C.", *Lagos Weekly Record*, 30 March 1885.

42. *Ibid.*

43. CMS G3/A3/06 Henry proctor to Baylis, 19 August 1895.

and flagitious crimes almost daily perpetuated by them?" Furthermore, "politically it (the Company) is no government. Can that be a true and real government which has no court of justice with adequate working staff? Can a judge and his clerk, practically two persons who are more or less at the mercy of the R.N. Company, form a court of justice?"<sup>44</sup>

By 1889 the sufferings of the Brass people were becoming unbearable. As the CMS agent in Brass recorded, the people were crying "omong" that is "hunger". "We dare not go to market nowadays" they grumbled. "We have no food to eat and how shall we go to church? Go and bring us bags of rice to eat, and we shall come to church, we are perishing with hunger, do try and help us".<sup>45</sup>

Their plight and importunity produced no modicum of support from the CMS and its missionaries. The CMS had the opportunity of presenting the case of their hitherto zealous Christians to Macdonald when, in 1889, the latter went to the Niger Delta to determine what form of government they would want to have. Whilst Bishop Crowther argued the cause of the educated Africans he lifted no finger to present the case of the Brass Christians. Robinson, an English missionary, and "a great advocate of the Company",<sup>46</sup> spent many hours with Macdonald, marshalling "very strong" arguments in defence of the company against its enemies, including the Brassmen.

It was about this time that the 'pagan' party in Brass, which began to revive with the desertion of Christianity, asked their new king Frederick Koko, to stop going to church and assume the headship of the national 'juju'. Chief Koko, a Sunday school teacher, refused to do so, hoping that the missionaries would help Brass out of its economic and social crisis.<sup>47</sup> A few months afterwards the Bishop, the Secretary to the Niger Mission (E.N. Eden) and Archdeacon D.C. Crowther went to Brass to remonstrate with them to return to the worship of the Christian's God. As usual they put their economic grievances before the missionaries. The latter's answer was both tactless and unsympathetic. As the Bishop reported: "To this [economic difficulty] we gave a very suitable answer to pray to God who could remove the difficulties in His own good time and way, which no false gods can do".<sup>48</sup> By 1893 the Brassmen were sour and disillusioned. As a whiteman observed: "On every side you see large and important 'European looking' houses of the chiefs, now very much dilapidated and seedy in appearance. The streets of the town are filthy and the people are apparently as careless and indifferent to better influences as they are slovenly and dirty in habits. A foreigner, black or white, has no kind of reception here, but is treated with marked coldness and disrespect".<sup>49</sup>

Driven to extremities, the Brassmen resorted to violence in 1895 in a manner well-detailed by Flint.<sup>50</sup> Violence did not end their misfortune, however. For the Royal Niger Company waxed stronger than ever right to the end of the century and the Brassmen lost their commercial ascendancy for ever.

44. *Lagos Weekly Record*, 30 March 1885.

45. CMS, G3/A3/04 Samuel Peters to R. Lang II, May 1889.

46. CMS *The Brooke Papers*, Journals Entry for 1 May 1889.

47. CMS G3/A3/04 F.W. Koko to Archdeacon Crowther, 25 April 1889.

48. Ibid. Bishop Crowther to Lang, 16 May 1890.

49. CMS G3/A3/05 H.H. Dobinson to Baylis, 18 August, 1893.

50. J.E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1960, chapter 9.



And while the educated élite were vituperating in a futile manner against their expulsion from the lower Niger trade, and the Brassmen were in anguish because of the imperialistic monopoly of the Royal Niger Company, another set of Nigerians were cursing the days when Goldie and his octopus imperial company appeared on the Niger. These were the Muslim rulers of the Sokoto Caliphate. For the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emirs of Bida and Ilorin, the Royal Niger Company was primarily a political and imperial organization. As early as 1890 the hostility of the Caliphate had been clearly manifested to the point that the company had to withdraw south of Lokoja and Goldie and Lord Scaborough had to go to Bida to placate the Emir.<sup>51</sup> As the historian of the Royal Niger Company and Adeleye have revealed clearly, conflict between the company and the Caliphate was, by 1891, only a matter of time. That time arrived in 1897 when Ilorin and Bida were conquered by the Royal Niger Company in a fashion that sent terror into the hearts of the rest of Nigeria and shook the Caliphate.

By the era of the Scramble relations between Nigerians and Europeans of all classes had become severely strained. Embittered and sour that the intruders had become unrelentingly aggressive, Nigerian peoples found it impossible to trust the whiteman any longer. He had become the sword of Damocles hanging over Nigeria, threatening to descend any moment. For nothing could be done to prevent him from further intrusion. Indeed in the last quarter of the century—when there was no more basic geographical exploration to be done—'explorer' like the German Herr Flegel, the French De Semelle and the British Joseph Thompson went into the interior. Missionaries penetrated the Sokoto Caliphate, presenting themselves as knight-errants of impending British imperialism. The traders, particularly the Royal Niger Company, had proved that they were not only selfish but that theirs was a mailed and imperial fist. Confrontation between Nigerian peoples and Europeans was only a matter of time. Bitterly, Nigerians discovered that the avowed friend had become an unabashed foe; that the erstwhile visitor had become the master.

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51. E.A. Ayandele, "The Relations Between the Church Missionary Society and the Royal Niger Company", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. IV no. 7, December, 1968, pp. 413-416.





## IV

# Nigeria in the Twentieth Century



## BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

T. N. TAMUNO

British administration in Nigeria in the 20th century can best be understood in its political setting. From 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> This long process involved a number of important measures including the removal of all visible African opposition to the imposition, expansion and consolidation of British central authority over the territory later known as Nigeria. A succession of British officials used coercion and diplomacy in former Northern and Southern Nigeria to reduce African opposition to a minimum. By 1914, Britain had succeeded in making herself the new paramount ruler over most of Nigeria. Pockets of resistance continued after 1914 as in Tivland, Egbaland, Igboland and elsewhere; more references to some of these cases will be made later in this chapter. These and other instances of restlessness under increasing colonial rule were forcibly suppressed with the assistance of the military and police resources at the disposal of the government. British rule in Nigeria was in the final analysis buttressed by force or by the threat of using it.

There were other important administrative developments in the evolution of the colonial state in Nigeria. To secure central direction of policy and pool economic resources, the British government from 1898 adopted the policy of gradually amalgamating its various administrative units in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> In May 1906 the Lagos Colony and Protectorate was amalgamated with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the new Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The government at the time did not seek the views of Nigerians in the two amalgamated territories—to ascertain whether or not they favoured such an amalgamation. The primary aim of the government in 1906 was economic—to use the better financial position of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to cover the costs of administration and development in the financially weak Colony and Protectorate of Lagos, then saddled with the white elephant of a railway in need of extension since 1901. The 1906 amalgamation, however, did not result in administrative fusion. The government, even after that

1. For details of aspects of this subjects see T.N. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*, London, 1972. I.F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960*, Oxford, 1969.

2. Ibid.

amalgamation, ensured that its high regard for the Yoruba chiefs in the Protectorate of Lagos was maintained. Besides, British officials assiduously avoided extending to the Protectorate of Lagos the policy and practice of punitive expeditions and patrols which had been frequent in the administration of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Such coercive measures continued in the non-Yoruba speaking sections of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria after 1906. There is no space here to discuss in detail the factors responsible for these differences in the styles of administering contiguous portions of Southern Nigeria before and after the 1906 amalgamation.<sup>3</sup> It is enough to emphasize the fact that more aggressive administration or coercion on the part of British officials in the non-Yoruba speaking sections of Southern Nigeria, and not 'civilization' or 'barbarism,' explains the phenomenon of prolonged resistance to colonialism in the former Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

Once more, the British government did not seek the opinions of Nigerians before amalgamating Northern and Southern Nigeria in January 1914. As in 1906, the primary British aim was economic. Compared with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria proved a relatively poor neighbour. Without direct access to the sea, with a larger area and population, with costly railway construction and river dredging projects, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria experienced serious financial difficulties only slightly relieved by the annual grants-in-aid from the Imperial Treasury. Northern Nigeria's annual share (about ₦140,000 since 1906) of customs receipts collected by Southern Nigeria and the loan of over ₦2 million from the latter for railway developments in the north did not, and could not, end its financial embarrassment. Co-ordination of railway policies throughout Nigeria provided another urgent reason in favour of amalgamation in 1914.

What was Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard's role in the 1914 amalgamation?<sup>4</sup> It was not necessarily Lugard's amalgamation, though he was its principal architect. Lugard, for example, was not a member of the special committee which in August 1898 had recommended that the British 'Niger Territories' be ultimately amalgamated. The policy of amalgamation was gradually carried out through the 1906 instalment even before Lugard undertook the next phase in 1914. Neither the 1898 decision nor the 1906 and 1914 instalments were considered as moral questions. The decision makers then and subsequently the principal executives did not raise the question: whether amalgamation was a right or wrong policy so far as Nigerians were concerned. The British officials involved in formulating and executing the policy of amalgamation were convinced that through it they would obtain a convenient and practical means of securing firm administration. In approving much of Lugard's scheme for the 1914 amalgamation, the Colonial Office did not close the door against further constitutional changes. As early as June 1913, officials in the Colonial Office noted that Lugard's amalgamation scheme, then under consideration, did not provide answers to the question: whether Nigeria should evolve as a unitary or federal state. These

3. These aspects have been fully discussed in T.N. Tamuno, *op. cit.*

4. For example, in March 1953 when the House of Representatives debated the notion for self-government in 1956. See B. Sharwood Smith, *But always as friends: Northern Nigeria and the Cameroons, 1921-1957*. London, 1969. p. 264. In the crisis which included Nigeria's civil war, Lugard was often blamed by advocates of 'Biafra' for the 1914 amalgamation.



officials hoped that answers to this question would emerge after the 1914 amalgamation had come into effect.<sup>5</sup>

The 1914 amalgamation gave the Northern and Southern Provinces a common political head; despite the more enthusiastic encouragement of indirect administration by Lugard and other officials in the post-1914 Southern Provinces, no uniform style of administration developed in either group of provinces. Nigeria, between the 1914 amalgamation and 1939, resembled a federation of two groups of provinces. Not all the major government departments were merged or centralized between 1912 and 1914. The amalgamation of such departments as Education, Police and Prisons proceeded gradually between the 1920s and 1930s. No central secretariat emerged before the early 1920s.<sup>6</sup> On the question of ascertaining the number of large administrative units within Nigeria, Lugard in 1914, for financial and personnel reasons, began working with two groups of provinces and not more.<sup>7</sup> World War I experience in Nigeria proved Lugard right in this respect for, coming soon after the amalgamation in January 1914, it made heavy demands on Nigeria's financial and staff resources. The position in both respects improved during the period of post-war boom in the 1920s but the subsequent world-wide Great Depression (1929-39) dealt severe blows to Nigeria's financial resources. With retrenchment and prudent spending, Nigeria during the 1930s nevertheless had enough staff and money for undertaking a further administrative reform. From 1 April 1939, the government split the former Southern Provinces into Eastern and Western Provinces.<sup>8</sup> Bernard Bourdillon, the governor at the time, justified<sup>9</sup> this change on three principal grounds. He and his staff, he said, had experienced delays consequent on increased work and transport difficulties in correspondence between Lagos and Enugu.<sup>9</sup> Though these arguments were tenable the other was not. Bourdillon maintained that ethnographical considerations led him to believe that the lower Niger provided a neat administrative line dividing the people of the former Southern Provinces. Bourdillon refused to split the Northern Provinces at the same time. He argued that unlike Enugu, in the Southern Provinces, Kaduna provided a more central capital for the Northern Provinces. Besides, he believed that the people of the Northern Provinces were more homogenous in culture than those in the Southern Provinces. The above administrative step taken by Bourdillon in 1939 left the heritage of the mistaken sacrosanctity for the tripartite division of Nigeria till 1963. No new regions (states) were carved out of the Northern Region till 1967. Not even Nigerian politicians, increasingly given the chance of discussing and modifying their constitutions since 1949, were bold enough to alter the tripartite administrative foundations of

5. C.O. 583/3, MP. No. 16460. minute by A.J.H., on 16/6/13.

6. For details See J.J. White, "The Development of Central administration in Nigeria, 1914-1935". Ph.D. Thesis, Ibadan University, 1970.

7. See F.D. Lugard, Cmd. 468: *Report on the Amalgamation of Nigeria, and Southern Nigeria, and Administration, 1942-1919*, London, 1920.

8. For the background see *Sessional Paper No. 46 of 1937: Reorganisation of the Southern Provinces*.

9. Ibid.

the Nigerian state before independence. The Nigerian inheritors of the state amalgamated in 1914 accepted and consolidated the foundations laid by generations of British officials. Despite waves of secessionist agitations<sup>10</sup> in Nigeria since 1914, the majority of Nigerians associated themselves with the nation-state they had inherited from colonialism. The needs of colonial administrators thereby left a deep mark on Nigerian history.

### **Nigerian Participation in Central Institutions of Government**

In matters of central administration, the colonial record in Nigeria left much to be desired. Nigerians were slowly and reluctantly associated with the central institutions of government. Until the 1950s, the major policy makers were British officials. There were times when the British Parliament interested itself in administrative matters affecting Nigeria. Parliament and British public opinion as well as representations made to the British government by such pressure groups as the United Kingdom-based Chambers of Commerce, the Aborigines Protection Society and others, also helped to shape administrative policies in Nigeria during the period of colonial rule. In Nigeria, press and sedition laws in 1903 and 1909 respectively succeeded in controlling African criticism of erring public servants and objectionable administrative policies.<sup>11</sup> The pamphleteering, mass petitions, and public rallies which featured prominently in Lagos politics till the 1920s were some of the non-violent methods adopted by aggrieved Nigerians in their criticism of British policies and measures.

Criticism also took place first in the Legislative and later in the Executive Council. In Nigeria, the government allowed African un-official representation in the Legislative Council based in Lagos before extending the same principle to the Executive Council. Both councils, it must be stressed, formulated or discussed important policies and measures affecting Nigeria. The principle of African unofficial representation in the Lagos Legislative Council was conceded for the first time in 1872.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, one, two or three Africans trusted by the government sat in the Legislature. These representatives till 1914 were resident in Lagos. More important, they were always in a minority when compelled to vote against official policies and measures. Apart from official majorities, the effectiveness of African unofficial members in the Legislative Council was limited by the Governor's power to initiate all legislation, by his veto, and by his power to reserve certain bills (e.g., divorce, currency and official salaries) for the Crown's approval. The Crown, besides, had power to disallow colonial ordinances. There were in addition the over-riding powers of orders-in-council and Acts of the British Parliament.<sup>13</sup>

More Nigerians were in the Central (later Federal) Cabinet and Regional Cabinets from 1951 till independence. By 1951 the British government began to make rapid concessions to the demands made by Nigerians for self-government. The new

10. T.N. Tamuno, "Separatist agitations in Nigeria since 1914". *Journal of Modern African Studies*, VIII (4) 1970, pp. 563-84.

11. See, T.N. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State*. F.I.A. Omu, "The Nigerian Newspaper Press, 1859-195," Ph.D. Thesis, Ibadan University 1966.

12. T.N. Tamuno, *Nigeria and Elective Representation, 1923-1947*, London, 1966, p. 7.

13. T.N. Tamuno, "The role of the Legislative Council in the administrations of Lagos, 1886-1913", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, IV, (4), 1969, pp. 555-70.

concessions allowed not only representative but also responsible government. These constitutional reforms marked the end of the long era of autocracy and the beginning of the period of partnership—that of associating more and more Nigerians with the central institutions of government—which preceded independence.

Two points need emphasis in this discussion of Nigerian participation in the central institutions of government. First, the educated élite based in Lagos persistently pressed for the right of participation in the decision-making process through representation in the Legislative and Executive Councils.<sup>14</sup> Nigerian chiefs elsewhere—in the protectorate—were not as insistent as the educated élite in that demand. Chiefs, particularly those recognized by the government, before the Creech-Jones Circular of 1947 (to be discussed later) were quite active as pillars of indirect administration in parts of the protectorate. Where these chiefs gained the confidence of British officials, the latter supported them in their assumption of power and influence to the disappointment of the educated élite. In Lagos, where British officials were more reluctant to emphasize indirect administration to the same extent that they did in parts of the protectorate, the *Eleko* and some White Cap Chiefs gave much support to the political activities of such educated élite as Herbert Macaulay and Curtis Crispin Adeniyi-Jones.<sup>15</sup> Second, the chiefs and people of the Northern Provinces (later Region) before 1947 were not encouraged by British officials to participate actively in the mainstream of Nigerian government.<sup>16</sup> It is not enough to explain this on the grounds of a divide-and-rule policy adopted by British officials. While some Residents, Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners between 1914 and 1946 encouraged separate development of the Northern Provinces, Governor Bernard Bourdillon (1935-43) and Lord Hailey (after his mission to Nigeria in 1940/41) strongly maintained that Nigeria's political future must lie in unity. What was however most obvious was that in the era of indirect administration—i.e., before 1947—some British officials failed to see how their own encouragement of indirect administration in the emirates threatened the early development of central institutions involving the chiefs and people of Northern Nigeria.<sup>17</sup>

There was also the related problem of Nigerianization of the public service, particularly at the major policy-making levels. This problem should be examined in its three broad phases—the liberal period of the 19th century, the period of the 'closed shop' (1900-47), and the period of the 'open shop' (1948-60). The periods suggested here are convenient and not absolute, the emphasis being on the years when these trends were quite noticeable.

Africans with ability in Nigeria and elsewhere in Commonwealth West Africa assumed positions of responsibility in their respective public services. Before the intensification of the Scramble for Africa, these trusted Africans performed yeomen's service in territories where the future was frequently in doubt. There was also an ecological explanation covering the entire 19th century. West Africa, till the 19th century, had been notorious as the whiteman's grave. The debilitating 'fevers' usually

14. For details of these electoral developments see T.N. Tamuno, *Nigeria and Elective Representation*.

15. T.N. Tamuno, "Un-official representation on Nigeria's Executive Council, 1886-1943", *ODU*, New Series No. 4, October 1970, pp. 46-66.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

associated with the West African coast and its adjoining areas had no effective remedies until the application of quinine. Far more success came towards the end of the 19th century when Dr Ronald Ross associated the mosquito with malaria. With the resultant emphasis on environmental sanitation in areas inhabited by European officials, the survival rate in West Africa of these expatriates increased. Correspondingly, there was less dependence on highly-placed Africans in the public service as the present century went on. An increasing British desire to establish and maintain firm administrations in West Africa from the 1890s also had an important effect on the choice of high-ranking public servants. By 1909, officials in the colonial office were quite determined to make their administrations in West Africa British in theory and practice.<sup>18</sup>

The African struggle for de-colonization brought a change of heart after World War II. From 1948, the government expressed its intention to Nigerianize the public Service through grants of scholarship and accelerated promotion. Nigerians had expected more rapid results during the 1950s under the direction of a Nigerianization officer,<sup>19</sup> but these hopes were not realized. Federalism directly and indirectly assisted the drive for Nigerianization. With the adoption of a federal constitution in 1954, federal and regional public services emerged in the same year. The Nigerian politicians who controlled the former Western and Eastern Regions were bent on using local men for responsible posts and allowed expatriates who resented this trend to retire with lump-sum compensations. Although Nigerian leaders in the Western and Eastern Regions during the 1950s pointed accusing fingers at the Northern Region for its slow pace towards Nigerianization, it must be realized that Nigerianization often meant the employment of westerners in the West, easterners in the East and northerners in the North. The pace of Nigerianization in the former Northern Region was understandably slower. That Region had fewer Western educated Africans than were available to the southern regions. Because of Northern Nigeria's long period of isolation from the main stream of Nigerian government and politics, and because of distrust and misunderstanding, Nigerian leaders in that Region for a long time distrusted the use of southerners in their public service. During the 1950s, northern politicians preferred expatriates to southerners in their public service.<sup>20</sup> Nigerianization since 1954 did not always bring to the top men and women of mature experience and the best qualifications. Favouritism, nepotism and political considerations cannot be completely ruled out in some of the cases of accelerated promotion to top posts in the public services of the federation before independence.

### **Nigerian Participation in Local Institutions of Government**

Before Nigeria formally became a federation, the authorities had distinguished between the organs of central and local government. Nigerians, particularly trusted chiefs, were given early recognition by British officials as agents of establishing, expanding and consolidating the colonial administrations. Since the late 19th century,

18. C.O. 520/82, MP. No. 40542, minute by C.S., dated 10/12/1909.

19. Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-97.

20. Sharwood Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 295.



British officials in Nigeria had seen practical advantages in working through the chiefs and in upholding aspects of African institutions. Claude MacDonald, Ralph Moor, Henry McCallum and William MacGregor had been 19th century exponents and operators of indirect administration in Southern Nigeria before Frederick Lugard rationalized and publicized the same principle and practice for the rest of Nigeria. With remarkable success, MacGregor and his successor Walter Egerton made indirect administration respectable in the Lagos Colony and Protectorate between 1900 and 1912. In the same period, Lugard, Percy Girouard and Hesketh Bell attained equally satisfactory results among the Emirs of Northern Nigeria.

Lugard and his successors till 1929 revelled in the excellence of expanding the scope of indirect administration in several parts of the post-1914 Southern Provinces without understanding the institutions of the people whose affairs they controlled. In fact in 1913, Lugard dispensed with the services of N. Thomas who had been the government anthropologist in Southern Nigeria since 1909. Lugard had done so in the mistaken belief that his administration did not require a trained government anthropologist.<sup>21</sup> Thereafter, the various administrations relied on the services of part-time anthropologists from the ranks of British political officers. In assessing the value of the work done by such part-time anthropologists, sufficient allowance must be made for their reliance on interpreters, and the limitations in time, money and other factors. The close links between anthropological information and the administration of alien people cannot be over emphasized. In the report on his tour of Commonwealth West Africa in 1926, W.G. Ormsby-Gore (later Lord Harlech), the former Under-Secretary for the Colonies, had also recognized the relevance of anthropology to administration.<sup>22</sup> In the Southern Provinces, the period of reckoning came quickly.

Between 1929 and 1930 women in parts of the Southern Provinces rioted and the government retaliated with bloody reprisals. The remote and proximate causes of the women's riots in the Eastern Provinces were complex, involving direct taxation, rising prices of imported goods and other grievances. British officials in Nigeria as well as Lord Passfield, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, however agreed that there were serious dangers in governing the people of these provinces without first obtaining adequate anthropological information on them.<sup>23</sup> Officials in the Northern Provinces ran into similar disasters in their administration of Tivland. There, as in the eastern sections of the Southern Provinces, British administration had been more direct than indirect. Besides, the government had applied coercion without understanding Tiv precolonial institutions. Consequently, Tivland experienced waves of riots and disturbances in 1929, 1939, 1945 and 1948—an unsatisfactory situation which

21. Cmd. 3784, 1931, p. 6.

22. W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore, Cmd, 2744: *Report on visit to West Africa during the Year 1926*, London, 1926.

23. Lord Passfield, Cmd. 3784: *Despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria regarding the report of the Commission of inquiry into the disturbance at Aba and other places in South-Eastern Nigeria in November and December 1929*, London, 1931.



continued with bloodier consequences after independence.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever advantages indirect administration offered, its practice in Nigeria showed certain defects. First, the role of the Resident or other political officer was left vague even in areas with recognized big chiefs. In *West African Chiefs*, the editors regarded the political adviser as a 'lobbyist', 'superior' and 'adviser' under a system of indirect administration.<sup>24a</sup> Frequently, the expatriate political officers were meant to advise the emirs and other chiefs in general matters affecting their various 'native' administrations without interfering with details. In practice, a lot depended on the ability and personality of the adviser and the advised. A delicate matter of human relations was also involved. Points of contact are also points of friction. Lack of caution and discretion on the parts of political officers and chiefs are dangerous factors in giving and taking advice. Where advice is synonymous with a veiled command, its potential for discord needs no elaboration. Where not clearly watched, the relationship between an overbearing expatriate political adviser and an intolerant Nigerian chief could degenerate into a painful master-servant type. The deportation, or other punishment, in such circumstances, of an offending chief merely aggravated the problem of securing and maintaining public confidence and loyalty. Indirect administrators in Nigeria were also exposed to the risk of endangering public confidence in the government-recognized chiefs. There was no doubt that the relationship between the government and the people was indirect—through the chief or chiefs in the village or town. But the people had a direct relationship with the chief—the government agent—in their midst. A chief, who in deference to the people's wishes, refused to meet unpopular government requests for forced labour (as long as it lasted) and direct taxation lost stature and prestige at headquarters. In the circumstances, a loyal chief to the government could well be unpopular in his village. Thus, the public confidence and loyalty which the government very much valued under a scheme of indirect administration at times turned out to be a mirage.

Occasionally, the British officials tried to learn from their administrative mistakes. Donald Cameron and Bernard Bourdillon, governors between 1931 and 1943, emphasized two principles in the application of indirect administration—the principles of tradition and acceptability. Both governors were equally reformist in their concept of indirect administration following the path of 'natural growth' although they failed to understand that colonialism did not provide suitable conditions for promoting such growth. They were instead keen on ensuring that persons with traditional authority should be used as pillars of indirect administration in the various villages and towns. Both governors were also impressed by the growth and development of cultural unions, professional associations and political parties in various parts of the Southern Provinces after 1914. The members of these groups, the governors realized, demanded a voice not only in the central but also local institutions of government. Both governors therefore favoured injecting into the 'native' adminis-

24. For details of these disturbances see T.N. Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria*, Ibadan, 1970, pp. 236-39.

24a. M. Crowder and O. Ikime, *West African Chiefs*, Ife, 1970, p. xxii.

trative structure younger and educated men of stature and ability in their respective areas.<sup>25</sup>

The policy and practice of giving such administrative structures in Nigeria a democratic base gained momentum during the 1950s. From 1950 the Eastern Region and later the Western Region also reorganized the preceding 'native' administration structures in their respective areas in favour of local government councils which allowed the elective principle for membership.<sup>26</sup> Between 1952 and 1953 sole 'native authorities' (government through a single chief) began to disappear from the scene in the former Northern Region; these were replaced by council government. About the same time, the chiefs of Northern Nigeria accepted the establishment of a regional ministry of local government.<sup>27</sup> From about 1947 the central government ceased to interest itself directly with indirect administration. This important change of policy had a lot to do with two factors. First, the Labour Government which came to power in the United Kingdom immediately after World War II was willing to confer self-government on some dependent territories without indicating a time-table of constitutional advance. The same government also showed interest in associating Africans, as in Nigeria, with the machineries of central and local administration. Arthur Creech-Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1947, declared that the 'development' of dependent territories was a principal goal of his government.<sup>28</sup> Development, in this context included political, economic and social aspects. Creech-Jones, in a circular letter of 25 February 1947, wanted to interest the masses in British dependencies in the ten-year development projects which were planned under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (1945). He also wanted Africans to acquire experience in civic responsibility as a necessary condition for success in working the central political institutions of their respective territories. The emphasis on development, he noted, called for modernization: for new demands and new responses. He was not convinced that indirect administration, emphasizing as it did aspects of the old way of life, could be easily and quickly adapted to meet the priorities of the new age of development. He continued:

It means a marked change in approach to indirect rule . . . Local government machinery is required for the administration of plans for progress in the economic and social fields, while an outlet is required for the growing political consciousness of the ordinary people. For these purposes the unmodified traditional machinery is inadequate; and, wherever possible, it must be adapted to the new needs of local government and administration.<sup>29</sup>

In Nigeria, a second factor explains the diminishing interest of the central government in indirect administration after 1947. The new constitutions of the 1950s moved

25. R. Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, London, 1968, p. 71. S. Bourdillon, *Memo-  
randum on the future political development of Nigeria*, Lagos, 1939, paragraph 3.

26. For details see M.J. Campbell, *Law and Practice of Local Government in Northern Nigeria*,  
London, 1963; P. Harris, *Local Government in Southern Nigeria*, Cambridge, 1957.

27. B. Sharwood-Smith, op. cit., p. 240.

28. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *The Principles of Native Administration in Nigeria: selected docu-  
ments, 1900-1947*, London, 1963, pp. 238-46.

29. Ibid., p. 246.

steadily towards formal federalism involving the sharing of powers between the federal and regional governments. In the new division of functions, matters of local government came into the category of a region's residual powers. Hence, the new regional governments, in which Nigerians increasingly decided major policies, dealt with issues connected with local government. It will be recalled that from the 1950s, local government councils became more and more democratic in form. Nigeria's systems of local government after independence had abiding roots in her colonial administrative experience.

### **Public Corporations and Boards**

The same conclusion can be drawn from examining the role of public corporations and boards before independence. The trend in creating and consolidating these bodies was more noticeable after World War II. In the new era of development, the government made new arrangements for certain services of public interest which could benefit not only from less bureaucratic controls but also from greater flexibility such as typified the management of private industry. Experience gained during World War I provided the main inspiration for the establishment between 1947 and 1949 of marketing boards in Nigeria. Nigeria then had four commodity marketing boards—one each for cocoa, oil palm produce, groundnut, and cotton. Among other duties, these boards were expected to stabilize producer prices, encourage and finance research.

The four commodity marketing boards used the Department of Marketing and Exports, established in September 1948, as their executive and shipping agency.<sup>30</sup> With federalism, government officials, after detailed discussion with Nigerians, agreed to modify the arrangements for the marketing boards. At the Resumed Constitutional Conference in 1954, the delegates agreed upon the establishment of a single all-purpose marketing board in each region. Besides, a Central Marketing Board was to provide the machinery for consultations between the new regional marketing boards. The regional marketing boards were to fix producer prices and adopt price support and stabilization policies. The Central Marketing Board was responsible for the overseas marketing and export of the commodities controlled by the regional boards. The Nigerian Produce Marketing Company sold such commodities abroad on behalf of the Central Marketing Board.<sup>31</sup> In 1958 the government again modified the above arrangements in the light of further constitutional changes. It abolished the Central Marketing Board and re-allocated its functions to the Federal Minister of Commerce and Industries, the regional marketing boards, and the reconstituted Nigerian Produce Marketing Company Limited. The London branch of the newly reconstituted Nigerian Produce Marketing Company made arrangements for selling Nigerian produce overseas.<sup>32</sup> During the 1950s, the

30. *Report by the Resumed Conference on the Nigeria Constitution* held in Lagos in January and February 1954, Lagos, 1954, pp. 61-63.

31. *ibid.* pp. 56-57, 63-64.

32. *Report by the Ad Hoc Meeting of the Nigeria Constitutional Conference held in Lagos, February 1958*, Lagos, 1958, pp. 3-5.

government also attended to the needs of several commercial, industrial and other corporations. In some cases, federalism and greater regional autonomy allowed, then encouraged the growth and development of these corporations and boards. For example, the old regional production development boards established after 1949 were replaced from 1954 by regional development corporations. Between 1950 and 1959, the central (later federal) government established the Nigeria Coal Corporations, the Electricity Corporation, the Nigeria Ports Authority, the Federal Loans Board, the Niger Delta Development Board, the Central Bank, Nigeria Airways Corporation, and the Nigeria National Shipping Line. For social welfare, the government continued to back in the 1950s such bodies as the Lagos Executive Development Board and the Nigeria Ex-servicemen's Welfare Association.<sup>33</sup> From 1954, the Regions had, in addition to the marketing boards, public corporations for finance, housing, broadcasting, printing, pharmaceutical industries, sports and others.<sup>34</sup>

Public corporations and boards are important in Nigeria's administrative history as examples of national control of public utilities and of key areas of enterprise which in some capitalist countries have been dominated by private industry. Their development in Nigeria coincided with the period of decolonization. However, serious doubts have been raised about the management and profitability of Nigerian public corporation and boards. During the 1950s they showed how easy it was for reckless politicians to use them for party patronage. Besides, most of these corporations, for a variety of reasons including poor management, corruption and incompetence, were unable to be financially self-sufficient. Series of special commissions of inquiries which investigated their activities in the 1960s failed to provide satisfactory answers to the problems spotted since the 1950s.

### Revenue Allocation

The problem of revenue allocation in Nigeria's administrative history pre-dated federalism. It formed part of the negotiations for the amalgamation of Nigeria, and was examined by the Niger Committee in 1898 under the need for pooling economic resources. The 1914 amalgamation gave Nigeria one consolidated revenue. Thereafter, the government regularly faced the problem of how best to use this revenue for the benefit of the people all over the country. Under a unitary constitution, the problem was complex enough since, as in the period 1926-48, there were no clear statistics about expenditure for the Northern Provinces. It was therefore easy for the people of the Northern Provinces to feel that their interests had been neglected, more so as they had had no Nigerians to represent them in the Legislative Council between 1914 and 1946. Even during the 1930s when the central government agreed to encourage development works by the 'native' administrations on the basis of cash, consent and competence, not all of them benefitted to the same extent.

For various reasons, the position became more complex after 1947. Under the Richards Constitution and those which succeeded it, the people of Northern Nigeria were encouraged by the government to associate themselves closely with the central

33. For a details discussion of public corporations and boards see T.O. Elias, *Nigeria: The developments of its Laws and Constitution*. London, 1967, pp. 94-111.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14.

administration, particularly through participation in the Legislative Council (later House of Representatives). Accordingly the question of revenue allocation was more and more politicized by the interested political parties. Federalism, by introducing the regional tier between the organs of central and local government, made more difficult the question of revenue allocation. Since the basis of revenue allocation, especially in a federal constitution, is largely dependent on the division of powers, frequent constitutional changes made it necessary for periodic reviews of arrangements concerning this controversial subject. Besides, the increased autonomy allowed between 1957 and 1959 was among other factors in explaining the frequency of changes in the basis of revenue allocation since 1946. Such changes were recommended in 1946, 1951, 1953 and 1958. Most of such recommendations were often adopted by the government after discussion with Nigerian politicians. So controversial was the question of revenue allocation after 1946 that Nigerians agreed to leave it in the hands of expatriate financial experts whose reports, however, were later considered by delegates during the constitutional conferences of the 1950s. In his 1946 report, S. Phillipson considered two principles, one of which was derivation—giving to a Region a sum equivalent to its contribution to the central revenue. The other was the principle of even progress—assisting relatively backward areas to catch up with the more advanced. Of these two principles Phillipson gave greater weight to derivation. In practice, arbitrary allocations based on these two principles took place under the Richards Constitution.<sup>35</sup> When Nigerian delegates to the 1950 General Conference at Ibadan could not agree on the basis of revenue allocation under a new constitution, they decided to appoint an expert commission to look into it. The new fiscal commissioners—J.R. Hicks and S. Phillipson—in their 1951 report retained the principle of derivation but took the novel step of also recommending the principle of independent revenue from such regional taxes as those on motor spirit. Because of Northern Nigeria's 'under-equipment' in schools, roads, hospitals and the like, the 1951 fiscal commissioners recommended a once-and-for-all grant of ₦4 million to that Region.<sup>36</sup>

The basis of revenue allocation approved under the 1951 Constitution lasted until 1953-54—a period of grave inter-regional tension in Nigerian history. When therefore delegates to the 1953 Constitutional Conference agreed to appoint another fiscal commissioner—L. Chick—they made sure that the terms of reference reflected their political objectives. Chick's terms of reference emphasized fiscal autonomy and the principle of derivation. Chick complied by retaining the principles of independent revenue and derivation. He however made it clear that the federal government should have power to make discretionary grants to a Region which suffered serious financial difficulty for reasons beyond its control.<sup>37</sup> His recommendations, accepted with minor modifications, formed the basis of revenue allocation under the 1954 Constitution. Under the 1954 Constitution, the Regions increased their sources of independent

35. *Report by S. Phillipson on the administrative and financial procedure under the new Constitution: Financial relations between the Government of Nigeria and the Native Administrations*, Lagos, 1947.

36. *Report of the Commission on Revenue Allocation*, Lagos, 1951.

37. *Report of Fiscal Commissioner on Financial effects of Proposed New Constitutional Arrangements*, Lagos, 1953.



revenue; from direct tax and cattle tax; licences, particularly vehicle and drivers' licences; and produce taxes on sales handled through the marketing board system. From 1 April 1956, the Eastern Region imposed and collected income taxes on Nigerians, a policy followed by the Western Region in 1957. In April 1956 the Eastern Region again began collecting purchase taxes on petrol and later on diesel oil.<sup>38</sup>

J. Raisman and R.C. Tress—the 1958 fiscal commissioners—were given terms of reference which significantly excluded the term 'derivation'. Their terms of reference required them "to have regard to the desirability of securing that the maximum possible proportion of the income of Regional Governments should be within the exclusive power of those governments to levy and collect, and at the same time to take into account considerations of national and inter-regional policy".<sup>39</sup> Raisman and Tress emphasized the well-being of Nigeria as a whole in any system of revenue allocation and argued forcefully that the financial stability of the federal centre was the main guarantee of the financial stability of Nigeria as a whole. The 1958 fiscal commissioners again examined the basis of government revenue derived from mining and minerals. Until 1958 the government had exclusive jurisdiction over mining royalties and rents involving coal, tin, columbite and oil; the revenue from oil royalties in 1958/59 was only ₦130,000. Under the existing system, all mineral royalties were returned in full to the Regions of origin. Raisman and Tress recommended a change of policy which would allow the federal government, the Regions of origin, and the other regional governments to share such revenue. In their recommendations, Raisman and Tress favoured the continuation of the principle of independent revenue and introduced that of the distributable pool. The distributable pool had revenue from various sources. Of the revenue derived from oil royalties and rents, 50 per cent went to the Region of origin. The remaining 50 per cent was shared out thus: 20 per cent to the federal government, and 30 per cent to the distributable pool where all the Regions (including the Region of origin) would have a share. Out of the revenue which accrued from imports (except motor spirit, diesel oil, tobacco and liquor), 70 per cent went to the federal government and 30 per cent to the distributable pool. Problems arising from revenue allocation have had no satisfactory solution in Nigerian history even after independence.

### **The Administration of Justice**

Problems connected with the administration of justice were of a different kind. The main problem here was that of securing justice and public confidence with or without separating the executive from the judiciary. As early as 1909, the government of Southern Nigeria had attempted to solve aspects of this problem by ending the old practice of making the Chief Justice an *ex-officio* member of the Legislative Council. Yet, the judicial functions allowed British political officers in the District Commissioners' Courts and 'native' Courts before and after 1909 continued to emphasize the survival of the same problem of linking the executive with the judiciary in Southern Nigeria. Nor was the position in Northern Nigeria between 1900 and 1913 better. There, the protectorate had no Legislative Council in which the Chief Justice was

38. *Cmd. 481: Nigeria report of the Fiscal Commission, July 1958.*

39. *ibid.*

required to sit; but political officers equally had jurisdiction over judicial matters in the cantonment courts at Zungeru and Lokoja and the provincial courts elsewhere. The Emirs of Northern Nigeria had greater say in the running of their 'native' courts than their counterparts in Southern Nigeria.

The 1914 amalgamation resulted in the merging of the two supreme courts which had hitherto operated in Northern and Southern Nigeria. Thereafter, Nigeria had only one Chief Justice and one Attorney-General. The provincial court system of Northern Nigeria was extended to the south from 1914. Below these courts were the 'native' courts. Of these series of courts, the provincial courts in the Southern Provinces evoked the greatest protests from Nigerian and other critics. Not only were these courts presided over by British political officers who were not necessarily professionally qualified lawyers, they were also not open to African or expatriate lawyers. The government sought to dispense justice through the political officers who, because of their executive duties, came into frequent contact with the people. It also tried to avoid difficulties in land and other cases allegedly caused by the activities of lawyers and their touts. The government, above all, regarded the provincial and 'native' courts as part of its efforts in indirect administration. Critics<sup>40</sup> of the provincial court system between 1914 and 1933 also had formidable arguments. They drew attention to the phenomenon of 'executive' justice which would inevitably follow from vesting political officers with judicial powers. They did not believe that the system of judicial review by Residents and the Chief Justice would rectify all the attendant errors; unrectified errors would, in their opinion, be grave in criminal cases where knowledge of the law was of great importance. As champions of equality before the law, these critics found a lot wrong in a system whereby criminal offences or civil cases affecting Europeans would be tried under the supreme court ordinance while similar cases involving Africans would go to the provincial and 'native' courts. Such a distinction, they argued, was inspired by racial prejudice and not by a consideration of the law which Africans and expatriates would wish to see enforced.

There was however force in the government's argument that the provincial courts decreased the burdens which otherwise would have fallen on the supreme court. The government again made some concession in 1922 by giving litigants the chance of applying for the transfer of their cases from the provincial courts to the supreme court. Such applications, however, were not always granted.<sup>41</sup> The provincial courts were not insulated from corruption. In them the court interpreter occupied a position equivalent to that of the clerk in the 'native' courts. The 'native' courts, particularly those in the Southern Provinces, suffered from the other problems already discussed in the section on indirect administration.

In the Northern Provinces, the government from 1932 allowed mixed courts to operate in areas where non-Muslim Africans had settled. These were usually in the *sabon-garis* (new towns) in such areas as Kano and Zaria. In these mixed courts, the presidents and assessors were so selected and appointed as to secure the confidence of the people whose cases went to them. The presidents of the mixed court at Kano,

40. For a detailed consideration see: O. Adewoye, *"The legal profession in Southern Nigeria, 1863-1943"*, Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, 1968, Chapters 4 and 5.

41. *ibid.*, pp. 190 and 219-23.

42. These were E. France of Accra, (1932-39); T.P. Barlatt of Sierra Leone (1939-50); and V.M.C. Tay of Keta (1950-54). T.O. Elias, *Groundwork of Nigerian Law*, London, 1954, p. 135.

established in 1932, were up to 1954 persons from the Gold Coast (later Ghana) and Sierra Leone.<sup>42</sup> The three assessors on the other hand represented each of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Whereas Islamic law of the Malikite school was practised in the 'native' courts, the customary laws of the litigants' communities were enforced in the mixed courts. This arrangement, though clearly an advance on the preceding system, however failed to cater for the needs of other strangers who did not live in separate sabon-garis in Northern Nigeria. Besides, the mixed courts disappeared under the new arrangements made from 1954.

Much earlier, from 1933, the government through ordinances undertook major reforms in the judicial system of the country. From April 1934, the provincial courts were replaced by a series of magistrate courts and a high court for the protectorate. The new magistrates were not all lawyers but lawyers were allowed to practise in their courts. The 'native' courts were also re-organized and provisions made for the establishment of divisional and provincial 'native' courts of appeal. The new system of appeals went beyond the supreme court through the West African Court of Appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. In 1933 the government revived the arrangement of a West African Court of Appeal tried in 1867 but discarded for Nigeria in 1874. Although a reorganized West African Court of Appeal had been set up since 1928 for Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and the Gambia, its jurisdiction did not extend to Nigeria until 1933.<sup>43</sup> Under another instalment of judicial reforms in 1943, the supreme court had vastly increased civil and criminal jurisdiction throughout Nigeria. The limitations placed on appeals from 'native' courts to magistrate courts were removed in 1943 and 1945. From 1943, lawyers had greater freedom to practise in Nigerian courts except the 'native' courts. The high court of the protectorate was abolished in 1945.<sup>44</sup>

Far-reaching reforms came after 1954 because of Nigeria's further constitutional advance towards formal federalism. The appellate jurisdiction of the West African Court of Appeal in Nigeria ended in 1954. The Privy Council however continued to hear appeals from the supreme court in Nigeria. Below the supreme court were the high court of the federal territory of Lagos, and the high courts of the Regions. Magistrate courts continued to function throughout the country. In the Western and Eastern Regions, 'native' courts were after 1954 called customary courts. Western Nigeria had four types of customary courts (graded A, B, C, D); in all Grade A and some Grade B courts presided over by legally qualified persons, lawyers were allowed to practise. The customary courts of Eastern Nigeria were redesignated county, district and local courts. Between 1958 and 1959, Northern Nigeria renamed its 'native' courts provincial courts. Alkali presided over the provincial courts in the ten muslim provinces while presidents and assessors were allowed for the provincial courts of the less predominantly Muslim areas of Benue, Plateau, Kabba and Ilorin.<sup>45</sup>

The system of law courts in Nigeria from the colonial era to independence raised the question of the existence in the same, or contiguous, areas of different concepts of law

43. Ibid., pp. 145-46.

44. Adewoye, op. cit., pp. 315-17.

45. T.O. Elias, *Nigeria: The Development of its Laws and Constitution*, pp. 323-24.

and justice. For example, in a 'native' court presided over by an Alkali, questions of intention and provocation would not affect the decision in a case of homicide whereas a magistrate or other court of the supreme court would consider them. Hence, in an Alkali court, there would be no distinction between manslaughter and murder.<sup>46</sup> Muslim law, besides, distinguishes between the admissibility of evidence not only from male and female Muslims but also from Muslims and non-Muslims,<sup>47</sup> whereas English jurisprudence emphasizes equality before the law. In land matters, English and Nigerian concepts concerning sale, transfer and compensation came into conflict since the annexation of Lagos in 1861 and the consolidation of British rule in the Protectorate of Nigeria. English concepts of criminal law have, since 1861, continued to influence practice in Nigeria, while considerable adaptation to meet local needs has been allowed particularly in the settlement of civil cases.

After 1933, the government steadily moved away from the earlier practice of involving the executive in the administration of justice. Not so in the 'native' courts of Northern Nigeria. Until 1958, Henry Willink (Chairman) and the other Commissioners who enquired into the fears of ethnic minorities admitted that the Emirs supplemented the Shari'a law by enforcing *siyasa* tradition in such serious matters as speaking evil of these chiefs. The Willink commissioners further observed that since the Alkali depended on the Emir's goodwill for promotion or transfer it was not unusual for the Emir to influence court decisions. The Alkali system then did not provide for inter-emirate transfers.<sup>48</sup>

Special provisions were made for judicial administration in Northern Nigeria under the Independence (1960) Constitution. Besides the High Court of Northern Nigeria, there were provisions for the establishment of a Sharia Court of Appeal and a Court of Resolution. The Sharia Court of Appeal dealt with "moslem matters" while the Court of Resolution examined matters affecting the respective jurisdictions of the regional High Court and the Sharia Court of Appeal.<sup>49</sup> Other special arrangements emphasized the independence of the judiciary in Nigeria. Under the 1960 Constitution, matters concerning the appointment and dismissal of judges were vested in the Judicial Service Commission. High Court and Supreme Court judges could not be dismissed without a special inquiry by a team of Commonwealth judges whose report would be sent to the Privy Council before further action was taken, where necessary, by both Houses of the Nigerian Parliament. Judges' salaries were fixed and paid into the consolidated fund of the federation or Region. The sections of the Constitution dealing with the appointment and tenure of high court and supreme court judges were entrenched and so could not be easily amended. Judges were not liable for damages in actions for libel or slander while they exercised their judicial functions. Comments in newspapers or elsewhere which touched upon matters before the law courts amounted to contempt of court and would be so punished.<sup>50</sup>

46. *Report of the commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them*, London, 1958.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

49. Elias, *Nigeria: The Development of its Laws and Constitution*, pp. 227-28, 241.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 243-46.

In Nigeria, the tradition of an independent judiciary continued after October 1960. But from 1963 Nigeria cut her links with the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and abolished the Judicial Service Commission. Even so, Nigeria's magistrate, high and supreme courts have not yet abandoned the colonial practice of following judicial precedents set in the English and Commonwealth Courts.

To sum up, the evidence in this chapter has shown that the administrative machinery which developed until independence reflected the policies pursued by the colonial power. Until the 1950s, the policy-making power was not shared to any large extent with Nigerians. Hence, in political, fiscal and judicial matters the goals and standards of performance were those determined by British officials. Even where policy guidelines were clear, theory did not always permeate practice. Problems raised by attempts at indirect administration emphasize the fact that, despite the role of a few influential members of the traditional élite, the prime movers were not the African chiefs but the British political officers. The editors of *West African Chiefs* rightly observed that chiefs were regarded as executives of the colonial power.<sup>51</sup> Where clear-cut policies were lacking as in the aims of public corporations and boards, it was not easy to draw the line between the needs of general welfare and measures designed to promote only profits. Both in making policies and in executing them a lot depended on measures and men. The role of the man-on-the-spot, guided by major events, in indicating the timing and nature of change often proved decisive. The attainment of such goals as justice in political and judicial matters often depended on the performance of the executives and the expectations of the government.

51. M. Crowder and O. Ikime, *op. cit.*, pp. xxi.



## THE EASTERN PROVINCES UNDER COLONIAL RULE

A. E. AFIGBO

For the Igbo, Efik-Ibibio, Ijo and Ogoja peoples who inhabit the region popularly known in colonial Nigeria as the Eastern Provinces the colonial period witnessed many far-reaching changes. For the historian it is not easy to produce a succinct account of the events of those years. Not only were the forces operating on the scene many and varied, but complex changes were taking place at the same time in all facets of the peoples' life. A strict chronological narrative of these events is bound to end in a jumble. Only a thematic description can impose order on the tangled developments of those years. But where this is done the reader must bear steadily in mind the fact that the various strands of history here isolated and analysed, formed, in real life, a tangled skein. With this *caveat* we shall deal with the period by discussing the following broad themes: the imposition of colonial rule, the administrative structure and the new society.

### The Imposition of Colonial Rule

In law, the Eastern Provinces became part of the British colonial empire on 5 June 1885 when the London Gazette announced to the world that her Britannic Majesty had placed "the Niger Districts" under her "gracious protection". But in terms of actual rule, which is to be understood as the successful establishment of a regular machinery of government which seeks, and is able, to administer the public life of the people, the historian has to think of a later date than even 1891 when Sir Claude Macdonald was sent to establish a regular administration in the Oil Rivers. Epochal as Sir Claude's appointment is now seen to be in retrospect, from 1891 it still required about two decades of almost unbroken war and fox-like cunning before British rule was effectively established in the areas away from the coast.

The imposition of British rule on the Eastern Provinces, or what the late Professor J.C. Anene aptly described as "the overthrow of indigenous authority" falls into two phases. The first phase stretched from 1849 to 1891. The question at issue in this period was not exactly that of political sovereignty, though the result of the struggle had serious repercussions on the power of the people to regulate their own affairs without external interference. The matters in dispute included the right of the coastal people to trade in any item of their choice, including human beings, and to exclude

foreigners from the trade of the interior. The details of this phase of the conflict belong to chapter 20. For our purpose in this chapter what is important is the fact that by the time the issue was resolved the coastal peoples of the Eastern Provinces had lost the power of independent action. By 1891 the back of their resistance to the European intruder, be he administrator, trader or missionary, had been broken. In this respect the Akassa Crisis of 1895 was the last serious episode in the bid of the coastal peoples to retain their independence. Macdonald found the coastal Ijo and Efik by and large sobered by the futility of their earlier resistance. They had matched their strength against the British invader and found the latter was very powerful. Added to this was the fact that centuries of close contact with European traders, as well as decades of close dealings with missionaries, had made them appreciative of certain aspects of European civilization, especially of European education, technology, commerce and luxury goods. While regretting the loss of their sovereignty they had, by the end of this first period of the encounter between indigenous authority and British imperial agencies, become more or less reconciled to their new fate. They were in fact to play a not inconsiderable role during the second phase of the contest between indigenous authority and alien imperial power.

This second phase in the imposition of British rule thus began with Macdonald's administration, though the import of his period of office has been underrated by some scholars who seek to build him up as a man of peace and diplomatic tact in dramatic contrast to his successor, Sir Ralph Moor, who is presented as the impatient man of 'blood and iron'.<sup>1</sup> It was in fact Macdonald who built up the power base that made possible the forward and militaristic policy of Sir Ralph Moor. By consolidating so well and so firmly the ground gained in the first phase, he made it inevitable that his successor should seek to gain new ground at the expense of the Igbo and Ibibio of the interior who were still in a position to fight for their sovereign independence and cultural identity. The coastal peoples had not been won entirely by diplomacy unbacked by naked power. Nor could the peoples of the interior who, unlike the coastal middlemen, had had fewer direct dealings with the British and therefore had fewer opportunities for understanding them or appreciating the wares they peddled.

Considerations of space and the general theme of this work prevent a detailed discussion of the numerous military engagements which characterized this phase. But two features are worthy of note. The first is the part which the coastal peoples played in the assault on the sovereign independence of their hinterland neighbours. By the late 1890s when this began in earnest, the Ijo and the Efik had produced a significant crop of lettered gentlemen whom the British aggressor found indispensable in the realization of his designs against the hinterland peoples. The first generation of the coastal élite staffed the junior positions in the administration. They were court messengers, civil police, court and office clerks, interpreters and political agents.

1. For this view of Macdonald and Moor see Anene, J.C., *Southern Nigeria in Transition 1885-1906* (Cambridge 1966) pp. 128-81. Flint, J.E., "Nigeria: The Colonial Experience from 1800 to 1914" in Gann and Duignan (eds.) *Colonialism in Africa: The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870-1914*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge, 1969). For a more balanced assessment of the career of Macdonald in the Oil Rivers see Obaro Ikime "Sir Claude Macdonald in the Niger Coast Protectorate—A Reassessment", *Odu*, New Series No. 3, April 1970.

Especially in the latter capacity, they at times formed the spearhead of the British assault against the Igbo and the Ibibio. On the Cross River, for instance, and in Ibibioland, Efik political agents like Chief Coco Otu Bassey at Itu, Henry Black Davies in western Ekoi, Ani Eniang at Uwet and so on, not only collected military and political intelligence for the British authorities, but on occasions, with encouragement from the British, led campaigns against the interior peoples. The coastal élite were also indispensable as a means of consolidating any new territory gained. British political officers were often few and far between. It was part of the business of these political subalterns of the imperial power to make the interior peoples realize that the old order had given place to a new one and that the British had come to stay.

But one must not minimize the dilemma in which the coastal peoples found themselves for to do so would be to misrepresent them as the lackeys of imperialism. It is in fact doubtful whether they saw their role as that of servants of the British invader. They probably saw themselves as engaged in the normal human struggle for survival. They had lost their monopoly of the coastal trade and had to find other means of supplementing their reduced earnings from this traditional profession. And employment in the colonial service was one obvious alternative. In fairness to the coastal Ijo and Efik it must be pointed out that they were at times reluctant to encourage the penetration of the interior by British political, economic and missionary activity. They saw the interior as a fair field for exploitation. They knew that the advantage they had over the Igbo and the Ibibio derived from the fact of their long-standing contact with Europe. If they allowed European technology, education and so on, to penetrate the hinterland, the Igbo and the Ibibio would soon be as good as themselves and this would spell doom to their superiority and ascendancy. In addition, they feared that the European businessmen who had displaced them on the coast would follow them into the interior and surely displace them there also.

But whatever their dilemma was, whatever their nagging doubts, they found themselves aiding and abetting the assault on the sovereignty and cultural integrity of the interior. The immediate upshot was that the rise of British imperium in the interior also saw the inauguration of an era of a new kind of coastal ascendancy in the life of the Igbo, the Ibibio and the Ogoja peoples. This ascendancy lasted for as long as the interior peoples found themselves compelled to depend on educated Ijo and Efik men for meeting those new needs which required a certain level of literacy. By the late 1920s most Igbo and Ibibio communities had produced their first generation of educated elements, thus bringing to an end this second phase of coastal hegemony over the hinterland.

The other notable feature is the military character of the assault. According to the plan, British rule was to be imposed by negotiation and diplomacy. This meant that the people were to be persuaded to be used only where the people proved unresponsive to peaceful overtures. Eventually force or the threat of it constituted the chief means by which British rule was imposed. There were many reasons for this. In the first place, and as already mentioned, the interior people knew very little of the newcomers and for long remained highly suspicious of them. Peaceful negotiation can only be based on mutual trust. This did not exist. In the second place, the political configuration of the interior was a serious handicap. None of the peoples in question came under the sway of a paramount authority with which the British could negotiate a meaningful

and far-reaching peace treaty. Instead the Igbo, Ibibio and Ogoja were fragmented into innumerable autonomous village communities each of which had to be dealt with in turn. This made the business of proceeding by treaty very difficult. As the British were later to discover, it did not make military conquest any easier. Whether by peace or by war each tiny community had to be dealt with in turn. And since every village could not be garrisoned, those villages in which troops were not quartered tended to regard themselves as having proved too powerful for the British. This sometimes meant that even villages which had been conquered before had to be conquered a second time.

The problems that this posed could easily be illustrated with reference to the British conquest of Igboland. By 1895 the Niger Coast Protectorate authorities had obtained a firm control of the coastal and had reached the southern borders of Igboland. The next set of expeditions started to scour various parts of southern Igboland. Messrs Tanner and Harcourt visited Akwete, Obegu and southern Ngwa while Major Leonard penetrated into Bende. With this the British ran into the stiff opposition of groups with vested interests in the interior. The first of these were the Aro, the Igbo and the Ibibio. On the Cross River, on the Niger and to the hinterland of the Ijo and the Efik the British administrator, merchant and missionary ran into a maze of intrigue and resistance which they attributed to the Aro. It would be a mistake to dismiss Aro intrigues against the British as put up by Moor who is said to have been anxious to build up a strong case for armed intervention in the interior.<sup>2</sup> But at the same time it must be recognized that if the Aro were able to persuade local groups to take up arms against the British, this was not because the Aro invariably had the power to compel them to do so, but because these groups had their own genuine fears and suspicions of the whiteman. In any case by 1899 the British had persuaded themselves that only by defeating the Aro could they achieve military and political control of the hinterland groups. Consequently preparations for the famous Aro Expedition started. Eventually the expedition began operations in late November 1901 and by Christmas Day the same year the Aro had been defeated.

But the Aro Expedition which had been projected as the war to end all wars in the Igbo and Ibibio interior soon proved to be only the beginning. In the event military expeditions far from being the exception virtually became the rule. The war against the Aro ended in March 1902. But before the end of the year it had become necessary to mount two expeditions against Igbo groups who were supposed to have been conquered along with the Aro. The first one was against the Olokoro clan of Umuahia, and the second against the Uzuakoli village-group in Bende. Military actions were taken against Afikpo and Umunneoha in 1903. Then came the Akwete Patrol and the grand Onitsha Hinterland Expedition in 1904. In 1905 the Ezza, the Ovor, Nonya, Onicha and Ahiara were defeated. Two years later Isuikwuato,

2. This would appear to be the view of Professor J.C. Anene. He talked of the British having built up Aro hostility into an "obsession". See Anene: "The Southern Nigeria Protectorate and the Aros, 1900-1902" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. 1, December 1956.



Urualla, Etche, Ntarakpu and Isiagu were fought and conquered. The years 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1914 saw scores and scores of military units fighting and subduing various villages and settlements which still regarded themselves as independent of the British. Eleven such expeditions were mounted in 1915. By 1917 troops of the protectorate were still marching up and down Igboland conquering violent, and overawing passive resisters. If space allowed it would be easy to show that the case of the Igbo was in no way special. The story was similar with regard to the Ibibio and Ogoja peoples.

The fact is that after the first few bitter lessons of direct opposition to the British, the people learnt how to deal with the British. On the approach of military columns they would assemble in their market places with music and dancing as well as with food and water for the troops. The white political officer and the troops would enjoy the 'wild' dancing and singing, pay for the yams, livestock and water and pass on to the next village convinced that the people in question had learnt their lesson. But as soon as this happened the latter would return to the same attitude of defiance convinced that their medicine men had successfully blindfolded the whiteman. This strategy proved eventually more exasperating to the British invaders than that of open defiance. And soon it made no difference whether a village resisted openly or passively. In either case the elders were manhandled and the houses set ablaze. Through these tactics the conquest of the Eastern Provinces was more or less accomplished by 1914.

### **The Administrative Structure**

It was in the logic of the situation that the establishment of a viable colonial administration should go hand in hand with military conquest. Indeed the structure of the administrative system and the distribution of power within it remained to the end one of the most vital issues of colonial politics in the Eastern Provinces. The British in the Eastern Provinces were convinced that the greatest need of the Igbo and their neighbours was how to maintain that law and order which would ensure the most effective exploitation of the natural resources which they believed abounded in the area.

Although with the appointment of John Beecroft as British consul in 1849 various efforts began to be made to set up some machinery of administration for the peoples of the Eastern Provinces, it can be argued with considerable justification that the establishment of a regular administration began with the appointment of Sir Claude Macdonald as Consul-General in 1891. When Sir Claude Macdonald arrived upon the scene in that year he had with him only six European political officers. Some of these he appointed Vice-Consuls. After choosing Old Calabar as his headquarters, he grouped the communities of the Oil Rivers into administrative districts called vice-consulates, each of these being centred around one of the major rivers of the protectorate for purposes of easy communication with the interior. The first vice-consulates in our area of immediate interest were Calabar, Bonny, Opobo and Brass. In 1895 an attempt at reorganization took place, and the vice-consulates in the protectorate were regrouped into three large divisions—Eastern, with headquarters at Calabar; Central, with headquarters at Bonny; and Western, with headquarters at Warri. The peoples of what later became Eastern Provinces came under the first two.

The year 1900 saw a major administrative reorganization of the protectorate largely in consequence of the extra territory which the abolition of the charter of the Royal Niger Company added to it. Four divisions were created that year, three of these lying



in our area of interest. These were the Eastern Division centred at Calabar and which apart from that ancient city included Opobo, Qua Iboe, Bonny and Degema; the Cross River Division centred at Ediba which embraced much unspecified territory, and the Central Division centred at Onitsha which also took in Akassa, Brass, Agberi, Oguta and Asaba. This remained the basic administrative structure of the area until 1906 when the Southern Nigeria Protectorate was amalgamated with the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. The new unit was grouped into three provinces with the Igbo, Ibibio, Ijo and Ogoja peoples east of the Niger falling under two of these—the Eastern Province with capital at Calabar and the Central Province with capital at Warri. The bulk of these peoples came under the Eastern Province and were further split into eighteen districts each under a district commissioner (the officer who, before 1900, was known as the vice-consul). What later became the Onitsha, Awka, Udi and Nsukka Divisions came under the Central Province. Of these only Onitsha was a full district while Awka was a sub-district. For some years it was from Awka that a pretence was made at administering the peoples of Udi and Nsukka. With the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 came another reorganization.

In consequence of Lugard's Provincial Courts Ordinance the three large provinces of the south were broken into nine smaller provinces, four of which lay east of the Niger and embraced nearly all the peoples of the present day eastern states. These were the Calabar, Owerri, Onitsha and Ogoja Provinces each of which was split into divisions and the divisions split in turn into districts. This remained the basic administrative structure until the eve of independence.

The provinces, divisions and districts were convenient units for organizing and carrying on the work of the central government which was largely in the hands of white officers. The grouping into units followed the hierarchical ordering of the colonial service, in which the Assistant District Commissioner (Officer) was the lowest in the hierarchy and the Governor the highest. In between were the District, Divisional and Provincial Commissioners (the latter were called Residents after 1914). Districts, divisions and provinces were also ranked hierarchically. Just as there were first and second class divisions and provinces, so there were first and second class Divisional Officers and Residents. At first only Owerri and Calabar were the first class provinces east of the Niger. The Resident and the officers under him were not only in-charge of the political work of their units, but also of those aspects of the life of the indigenous peoples which would normally come under such central departments as Education, Agriculture, Prisons and so on. They were thus maids of all work and had to divide their time between actually administering the political life of the people and doing the routine departmental work of the central administration.

Below this level which was entirely in the hands of European staff was local government. In this sphere the British faced in the Eastern Provinces intractable problems which they never fully identified and which, consequently, they failed to solve satisfactorily. Two major problems confronted the colonial administration in the early stages. One was the shortage of European staff; the other inadequacy of communications and means of transport which alone could enable one white political officer to govern effectively the large expanse of territory and the teeming populations that made up a division. In the event the administration decided to govern the peoples of the region through their local rulers. Not only was this cheap, not only did it make for administrative continuity, but it was believed to soften the shock which the introduc-

tion of Western ideas was believed to administer to a 'primitive' people. There is some argument as to whether the British tried to apply this policy, popularly described as Indirect Rule, to the Eastern Provinces in the period before 1930. The view maintained here is that they did, even though in the process they made many grievous mistakes which helped to frustrate the attainment of their ultimate objectives.<sup>3</sup>

These mistakes derived from two basic assumptions which were mutually contradictory and each of which helped to lead the British astray. Firstly, the colonial authorities assumed that the Igbo and their neighbours had remained at such a low level of civilization that they had failed to evolve any system of government properly so-called which could adequately maintain the modicum of law and order necessary for sustained development. This open contempt for the peoples prevented the British from making an early and genuine attempt to understand the peoples' indigenous government. The second assumption was that in so far as the people had evolved a socio-political system, it was one centred around the institution of chieftaincy. This attitude which presumed the answer to the question of how the people governed themselves not only helped to hinder research into the structure of, and the distribution of power in, the indigenous political system, it was also responsible for the fact that Indirect Rule among the Igbo and Ibibio tragically came to mean rule through chiefs in place of rule through the representative assemblies of the villages and village-groups.

The history of local government in the Eastern Provinces during the colonial period falls neatly into three phases, only the main characteristics of which can be dealt with here. The first phase covered the years 1891 to 1912 and was the period when Sir Claude Macdonald, Sir Ralph Moor and Sir Walter Egerton headed the administration of the old 'Southern Nigeria'. This period which coincided with the period of conquest was necessarily turbulent and was marked by mutual suspicion and ignorance on the parts of both the Nigerian peoples concerned and the colonial invaders. Among the Efik and Ijo who did, by the 1890s, possess certain chiefly institutions, the nature of these institutions was either not clearly understood or deliberately ignored.

In the circumstances no really meaningful inquiries were made into the peoples' social structure. Hence, desirous as they were to govern the conquered peoples through their indigenous institutions, the British ended up foisting on them a governmental system of an alien character.

Along the coast, there was no difficulty in finding who were the leading personages of the trading states. There was the advantage of long contact. Also the traders and missionaries were willing to help the administration with their intimate knowledge.

3. For this debate see, L. Mair, "Indirect Rule in Iboland"? in *West Africa*, No. 2335, 1962, p. 238; E.A. Ayandele, "Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria (Longmans 1966) p. 285. A.E. Afigbo, "The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria: Direct or Indirect Rule?" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. III, No. 4, June 1967. O. Ikime, "Reconsidering Indirect Rule: The Nigerian Example", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. IV, No. 3, December 1968.

The result was that the choice of those who were made the local agents of British rule was fairly easier and more along traditional lines than was the case in the interior. The trouble came in determining the amount of power and authority to invest in these personages. Because their true constitutional position was misunderstood they ended up being artificial creations like their upstart colleagues in the interior. The failure to see them as mere presidents of their house, ward or village councils gave them a false position.

In the interior the issue was confounded by the fact that it was not easy to locate the traditional heads of the villages and village-groups. Where the people were consulted they more often than not misunderstood the purpose of the request and pushed forward as their chiefs people who had no special status in traditional society. Communities which thought that those they presented would be killed or sold into slavery presented slaves or criminals or ne'er-do-wells as their chiefs, while others who thought the whitemen needed messengers sent able young men. In many places the administration chose chiefs without reference to anybody and made similar mistakes. But not all those who were chosen as chiefs were nonentities or rogues. Many of them in fact were the traditional heads of their villages. But even when this was the case the amount of power entrusted to these chiefs was far in excess of what any political leader would have enjoyed in the pre-colonial era. And in any case they were equally as corrupt and as oppressive as their less traditional colleagues.

To distinguish them from common impostors and blackmailers, of which there were many in this period, and to legalize the power they exercised over their fellow countrymen, each of those recognized as chiefs by the colonial administration was given a certificate to that effect. This certificate was known as a 'Warrant' and partly for this reason the chiefs came to be popularly known as Warrant Chiefs. To some scholars these men were Warrant Chiefs because all the power and authority they enjoyed derived from their possession of the Warrant. But this should not be taken to mean that there were not amongst them people who possessed natural qualities of leadership, and who would have emerged as leaders of their peoples even if British rule had never been imposed. It is, however, necessary to point out that at the time these men were called 'Warrant' or 'Warranted' Chiefs also in order to distinguish them from another class of chiefs who equally had a recognized status within the administrative system. This latter class were called either minor chiefs or headmen. They were the representatives of the Warrant Chief in the wards or villages. When the Warrant Chief was not immediately available the government treated with these minor chiefs through the court clerk or messengers. In another sense the minor chiefs were 'Warrant Chiefs on probation', as one of them was usually chosen to succeed a deceased or disgraced Warrant Chief.

For each local area within a district or division the Warrant Chiefs were constituted into an all-purpose body which was at once a court as well as an executive and legislative body for the area under its jurisdiction. In law this body was known as a Native Court and it is by this name that it has gone down into history. But as a detailed study of its functions and history shows, this was certainly a misnomer. More appropriately it was that which later came to be popularly known as a Native Authority. If the Native Court met at a district headquarters where it could be often presided over by a political officer, it was known as a Native Council. But where it sat at centres away

from district headquarters and had to be presided over by a local chief who was elected by his compeers for a period of three months, the Native Court was known as a Minor Court. Each district or division had only one Native Council but several Minor Courts. Under this system, appeals lay from the Minor Court to the Native Council, and from the latter to the political officer who was a commissioner of the Supreme Court, and finally from that officer to a judge of the Supreme Court.

Each Native Court had a clerk who recorded its proceedings, conveyed to the chiefs the list of members chosen by the District Commissioner to sit for the month and issued summonses to the accused. At first these summonses were served to the accused by the complainant. But when it was discovered that this generally led to a fight between the two, court messengers clothed in special uniforms were employed to take over this responsibility and to maintain order during the sittings of the court as well as to keep custody of criminals sentenced to imprisonment until they were transferred to District Prisons. Each Native Court also had a fund out of which, in consultation with the District Commissioner, it paid the salaries of its members and staff, as well as provided basic local amenities.

With minor occasional changes in detail this remained the basic structure of local government in the Eastern Provinces during the period 1891 to 1912. Macdonald, Moor and Egerton indulged very little in theorising on the basic principles of their policy. But the little they said on this makes it quite clear that they saw themselves as ruling the people through their indigenous political institutions. They saw the Warrant Chiefs as traditional chiefs. They regarded the system as "without parallel in all West Africa", partly because it was cheap and partly because they believed it made for harmonious relations between the colonial administration and the people.

But Sir Frederick Lugard thought differently when he came back in 1912 as Governor-General of the Nigeria which he was mandated to amalgamate. He saw the system erected for the Eastern Provinces by Macdonald, Moor and Egerton as different from that which he had helped to establish in the Northern Provinces. In this context and in his thinking, 'different' soon came to mean 'inferior' and unsatisfactory. He inveighed against the arrangement by which political officers sat as presidents of Native Courts, the fact that appeals lay from Native Courts to the British Courts thus creating a loophole for legal practitioners to intervene at some stage in the settlement of native disputes, the fact that there was no system of direct taxation which could form the basis for Native Treasuries, the fact that there were no paramount chiefs and so on. In short he was anxious to make the local government system of the Eastern Provinces uniform with what he had set up in the Fulani emirates of Northern Nigeria. He believed it was only by so doing that the Eastern Provinces could be brought to know real political progress and quiet. To this end he extended the provisions of the Native Courts, Native Authorities, Native Revenue and Provincial Courts Ordinances to the Southern Provinces.

For the Eastern Provinces this implied far-reaching changes. Among the most important were the fact that he insulated the Native Courts from the British Courts, interposing between the two the Provincial Courts manned entirely by political officers and from which legal practitioners were excluded; abolished the rudimentary system of native treasuries attached to the pre-1914 courts; abolished the practice of political officers presiding over Native Courts; curtailed the number of court messengers attached to each Court, and introduced the idea of sole Native Authorities through



the creation of paramount chiefs and permanent presidents. He also sought but failed to institute direct taxation and native treasuries, to institute native prisons manned entirely by local chiefs and to curtail the representation of villages on the Native Courts in order to encourage the emergence of chiefs capable of controlling large areas. But in the light of subsequent events the most important result of the Lugardian reforms was their effect on the administrative service. The argumentation that preceded and followed the reforms clearly revealed that Lugard and the senior Northern Officers had no confidence in the ability of their Southern colleagues—a fact which embittered these officers and split the service into pro- and anti-Lugardians. This development meant that, even assuming that all other conditions were favourable, the Lugardian system could not be applied loyally and energetically by all concerned. But all other conditions were far from favourable.

Just as Lugard was inaugurating his reforms the First World War broke out thus making it necessary for all officers in the political service of the Eastern Provinces who had military training, and these were many, to re-enter the army. This caused such a depletion of the staff that the effective supervision of the local administration on which Lugard had hoped to rely for the smooth transition from the pre-1914 to his own system could not be assured. Added to this was the growing general unrest which accompanied the penetration of indigenous society by the new economic, political and social forces unleashed by colonial rule.<sup>4</sup> Consequently many of the Lugardian reforms either failed to take root or led to totally unanticipated and undesired ends. Judging from the records that survived from these years and from oral tradition, the court members and staff became hopelessly corrupt and oppressive thereby perverting the purpose for which these institutions of local control had been established.

While Lugard was on the scene only a murmur of disapproval of his system was heard. But as soon as he left in 1919 this grew into a roar. From all parts of the Eastern Provinces officers wrote to headquarters to say that the entire administrative system was a failure and that the government was losing touch with the people. But on the reason for this development there was no agreement. Some, blamed it on the new-fangled ideas of Lugard and what they considered the ill-advised attempt to import the Northern system into the chiefless communities of the East. Some held the opposite view that the trouble stemmed from the fact that the system then operating in the area was not Indirect Rule properly so-called. While the former group thought that the only remedy lay in a return to the "good old system" of Moor and Egerton, the latter group saw salvation only in pressing on courageously along the path already mapped out by Lugard and introducing emirate Indirect Rule hook, line and sinker. A third group absolved the colonial service from all blame. In the view of this group the trouble lay with the people who were so primitive in their ideas of political obligation and responsibility that they could not be expected to operate any system of government with success. The thing to do, this group contended, was to abandon all idealistic notions of governing indirectly and impose British legal and local government systems.

The situation was seen as so serious that the new Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, sent his Secretary for Native Affairs, S.M. Grier, to tour the Eastern Provinces and report

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4. For some of these developments see chapters 25 and 26.



to him on the political situation there. Grier, reporting in 1922, blamed Lugard for the mess and recommended sweeping changes, the implementation of which would have required a lot more staff than the administration could at the time afford. This appeared too much for the top brass of the government, and in any case radical reform is not in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon statesmanship. As a result, Grier's assistant, Mr George J.F. Tomlinson, was asked to report again on the situation. After covering much the same ground as Grier, Tomlinson advised in 1923 that the political situation in the Eastern Provinces had not yet become a crying scandal requiring urgent and extreme measures. On the contrary, the machinery still functioned, albeit unsatisfactorily, and could be set right by minor changes here and there.

After wading through the two reports and the massive correspondence on this matter, Governor Clifford and Colonel Moorhouse, the Lieutenant-Governor for the Southern Provinces, agreed that the situation had something to do with the fact that the Native Courts were not truly traditional. Not only were many of the chiefs not the traditional heads of the units they represented, but the Native Court areas did not coincide with ethnic boundaries. They therefore recommended that political officers should make discreet inquiries to locate the traditional chiefs of villages and the traditional boundaries of clans. The end in view was gradually to adjust Native Court boundaries to agree with tribal boundaries and to replace untraditional Warrant Chiefs with traditional chiefs as the former died or were weeded out for misconduct. They also agreed that the failure of the system in the Eastern Provinces derived in some measure from the fact that the native authorities were not in fact Native Authorities as they had no Native Treasures to provide them with funds for local development. Clifford and Moorhouse therefore felt that the time had come to introduce direct taxation. In a sense this was a victory for the Lugardians in the service.

After making these recommendations Sir Hugh Clifford left Nigeria as Governor and was succeeded by Sir Graeme Thompson whose unpleasant duty it was to see them implemented. With a haste which ran counter to the best considered advice of the officers serving in the Eastern Provinces, the government went on to impose taxation on the people. What was worse they did so in accordance with the regulations of the Native Revenue Ordinance which had been drawn up to meet conditions existing in the Northern Provinces. This involved an attempt to carry out a detailed assessment of the peoples' wealth and a decision to collect the tax through the chiefs. These two steps were again against the advice of the officers East of the Niger. They had pointed out that the assessment prescribed by the Native Revenue Ordinance involved inquiries of such a nature which the Igbo and their neighbours were not likely to take without protest, and that in any case there were no chiefs of sufficient standing to help in the work of assessment as prescribed by the Ordinance. Also they felt that the Warrant Chiefs and Native Courts had become so discredited that using them as agents for carrying out the new measure was one way of making it hateful to the people. But these observations were brushed aside as unorthodox and irrelevant and an attempt was made to work in accordance with what had come to be considered the revealed principles of Lugard.

Everywhere the people protested against being taxed. But even more so they protested against being counted, as against a census of their livestock, palm trees and yam mounds. In the same manner they were against their farmlands being measured

as they thought the government would seize these. In spite of sustained propaganda they could not see how taxation made the census necessary since they saw the latter as a sinister proceeding that could have untold consequences for them. Also they could not understand how the British who minted the money they used could not simply mint more if the government were in need of funds. As all this was happening two other developments complicated the situation. One was an increase in import duties which led to a rise in the prices paid for imported materials like calico, tobacco and so on which had become daily necessities. The other was a fall in the price of palm produce which had become the peoples' main means of earning money. Somehow the first year's collection was done with only minor incidents. By the time the second collection was being made the economic situation had worsened, people had had a practical experience of what direct taxation meant to their purses and there was also a rumour that women were going to be taxed along with the men. At this point the strain became too much for the people to bear and the immediate upshot was the Women's Riot of 1929/30, which took the government by surprise and brought the Warrant Chief system of rule to ruin. This was the end of the second phase in the administrative history of the Eastern Provinces under colonial rule. The third and final phase took its rise from there.

The Women's Riot shocked the colonial authorities to a sobering awareness of the extent of their administrative mistakes in the preceding three or four decades. Immediately it dawned on most people that probably Mr Grier was more justified in his pessimistic radicalism than Tomlinson had been considered in his optimistic moderation. Consequently there followed an attempt at root and branch reform. Five main principles guided the reorganization of the Native Court Authority system in the Eastern Provinces between 1930 and 1938. The first was the principle of broad-based democracy. The administration came to face the hard fact that no group in the Eastern Provinces had evolved a political system based on chiefly autocracy. On the contrary, authority was dispersed widely in society. The attempt at reorganization was to ensure that all major segments in each unit of local government were represented by the traditional leaders. This led to the creation of clan and village assemblies in which every lineage head was expected to attend. The officially recognized authority was in most cases the clan assembly or council. While the village assemblies were allowed to function as subordinate Native Authorities it was hoped they would in time wither away. All this was an attempt to get away from the pre-1930 idea of one man, who was arbitrarily chosen, claiming authority over people to an extent not justified by traditional usage.

The second principle was that of maintaining ethnic integrity. It was recognized that though Igbo or Ibibio or Ijo or Ogoja culture could each be said to be generally uniform or homogenous, there were small but significant differences in institutions and political practices between the different sub-cultural units of each. In order to maintain political unity and common purpose it was considered necessary not to repeat the pre-1930 mistake of grouping ethnic fragments which had significant differences of culture and tradition under one local authority or of including members of the same ethnic unit in different local authorities. Thirdly, an attempt was made to teach the Igbo and their neighbours the need to separate the executive from the judiciary. In the pre-1930 courts, like in the indigenous system of government,

executive, legislative and judicial powers were vested in the same body. The authorities felt that this was partly responsible for the fact that the chiefs abused their powers since the same man who made the bye-law, enforced it as well as prosecuted and tried those who refused to take his orders. Also, they felt, this non-separation of powers hindered the evolution of an executive authority as the chiefs tended to emphasize more the judicial side of their duties. Thus with the reorganization the administration set up a Native Authority and a Native Court for each Native Administrative unit.

The fourth principle was that of ensuring that the Native Authority and Native Court staff, that is the clerks, the court messengers and so on were local youths. It was contended that the clerks and messengers abused their powers under the Warrant Chief system because being usually strangers they were not generally interested in promoting the welfare of the Native Authority areas they served, and that in any case they were not amenable to local opinion which was a recognized means of informal control. With this decision many of the clerks and interpreters who had been recruited from among the coastal élite became redundant and were retrenched. Finally the administration was determined to get the Native Authorities to recognize that their main duty was to promote local development. To this end, the members were compelled to take an interest in tax collection and assessment, in their native treasuries, in the drawing up of their annual estimates and in the disbursement of their funds.

For the first ten years or so of reorganization the Eastern Provinces were agog with enthusiasm and optimism. The administration believed that they had discovered the Lugardian stone that would turn the so-called direct administration of the Eastern Provinces into Indirect Rule and that the inhabitants of those provinces would soon be making the much desired political and social progress. The people on their side were equally excited by the new measures. Some rejoiced in the fall of their enemies, the Warrant Chiefs, and in the opportunity which they wrongly believed was now offered them to avenge ancient wrongs and enjoy as much ill-gotten wealth and power as the Warrant Chiefs had done. Some others were taken in by the propaganda that their traditional systems of government were being revived. By 1938 most of the Native Authorities had been reorganized. By 1940 the excitement of the last decade had faded and was succeeded by disillusionment.

The administration and the people soon found the new bodies disappointing. For one thing the Native Authorities and Native Courts were rather unwieldy. The British complained that the proceedings were noisy and the members uncontrollable; the elders complained that the whole thing cheapened chiefship. They found that being so many they could not enjoy as much power and influence as the Warrant Chiefs had enjoyed. They looked upon themselves as chiefs and were disappointed to find they were mere delegates. What was worse, since the finances of the native treasuries were so shaky, it was impossible to assign every court or council member a reasonable stipend. Instead each council had a lump sum which its members shared as sitting fees and each person's share turned out to be very paltry. Not surprisingly many members grew apathetic and dropped out. The administration also complained that the members were too illiterate and unintelligent to develop financial sense or acquire the know-how of modern budgetary processes. To make matters worse the Second World War broke out in 1939 just as the new bodies were being set up. One result of this was

shortage of the experienced staff who were supposed to train the councils in their duties.

By the time the Second World War ended it had become clear that the Native Authority system had failed. In spite of an attempt to reduce the membership, the councils and courts remained too unwieldy to conduct the modern business of government with despatch. They did not provide enough scope for the participation of the educated elements who in reaction to this were forming village and town unions and seeking to take over the duties of the Native Authorities. In addition, the old cries of corruption were raised. The political consciousness engendered by the war made the whole system founded on the narrow basis of conformity with traditional practices untenable. After the war, therefore, the colonial government retreated from the undiluted Native Authority system, and adopted what has been called the 'Best Man Policy'. Under this policy each community was allowed to send to the Native Authority Council and Native Court the men it considered 'best' qualified to represent their interest. Such people could be traditional leaders, or educated youths or retired government servants, but that was for each community to decide. This reform turned out to be the thin end of the wedge, for by the late forties it had become quite clear that the policy of native administration had hopelessly broken down in the Eastern Provinces. Through the modern mass parties and the village and town unions the educated elements pressed for far-reaching reforms. In despair the colonial government decided to introduce a modified version of the British local government system. And in 1951 the system of county councils was introduced—with the first county council in the Eastern Provinces being established in Ikot Ekpene. This gave the educated elements the opportunity to flood the local government councils in consequence of which local politics came to be drowned in national politics. In a sense it could be said that at the level of local administration colonial rule in the Eastern Provinces virtually ended with the demise of the Native Authority system in 1951.

### **The Emergence of a New Society**

Igbo, Ibibio, Ogoja and Ijo societies, like other societies in Africa, underwent far-reaching transformations under the impact of colonial rule. The very fact of colonial conquest shook the foundations of traditional society. The full impact of this on the Igbo and their neighbours can be appreciated only when it is remembered that for the various autonomous communities in this area which prided themselves in their independence and had often boasted of their military invincibility, there was no case of alien conquest and rule previous to British occupation. Until the moment of bitter and, to the people, inexplicable defeat, each village was sure it was equal to the British threat. The Aro, for instance, before 1901, boasted to all and sundry that they would push the British back into the sea and, because this was generally believed, they found it easy to instigate resistance to British advance in many Igbo and Ibibio villages. When subsequently they were beaten it caused consternation and dismay throughout the Eastern Provinces and people started asking how *Ibinukpabi*, the famed Aro oracle, could not protect its own shrines, and how the widely feared Abam, Ohaffia and Edda warriors could not ward off the British attack. Still, few villages were overawed which explains why the British had to continue campaigning in the Eastern Provinces until the end of the First World War. Three years after the defeat of the





*British administrative centres and boundaries, 1924*

Aro, for instance, the Ezza of Abakaliki told Major Crawford Cockburn, the District Commissioner in charge of the Cross River area, that they had heard how the Aro were beaten, but then that they the Ezza were stronger than the Aro. The Ezza had never been conquered by anyone, they boasted. In the whole wide world, they continued, the Ezza recognized only the Heavens above and the Earth beneath. Again, in a few days campaign the Ezza were beaten.

It was not only the traditional military machinery that failed, but also the time-honoured gods and medicine men. These too had been evoked to fight against the British but to no avail. Thus the very fact of conquest shook the peoples' belief in the superiority of their culture, and in its adequacy for all occasions. Consequently on the morrow of conquest many people found themselves disposed to acquire the secret of the whiteman's power. This quest, reinforcing a traditional tendency to imbibe new ways as long as they worked, led to a widespread drive among the Igbo and their neighbours for the transformation of their society.

Apart from disappointment with the traditional culture and institutions, there were other factors making for change and unrest. As already shown, military conquest was



quickly followed by the supersession of the old political order by a new one in which many people who were neither titled elders nor lineage heads, and many who were neither upright nor even freeborn made good. The British not only turned the old political order upside down, they also changed the economic pattern of society. They fought against the slave trade and slave dealers, causing many ancient families to lose their sources of cheap labour. They introduced new currencies in place of the old ones, as a result of which most of the latter in time became scrap metal to be broken up and used as projectiles in Dane guns. As part of the new economic measures, the government built motor roads linking all the administrative centres, and cleared the creeks so that they could be used by larger vessels like launches. To this end it issued the Roads and Rivers Proclamation in 1903 enabling chiefs to recruit labour for this purpose as and when requested by the authorities. These roads quickly became the arteries of commerce and new ideas. The people who were forcibly recruited to work on them returned to their villages with strange ideas in their heads and probably also with resentment in their hearts against the local chief who had recruited them.<sup>5</sup>

Along with the government and the traders came the missions. The Presbyterians had led the way when they established a station at Calabar in 1846. They were followed by the CMS Niger Mission (1893) and the Qua Iboe Mission (1887). The missionaries challenged indigenous society much more radically than either the government or the traders did. They not only shook the faith in the traditional gods who had provided the ultimate sanction for indigenous society and morality, they also insisted that the Igbo and their neighbours could not actually become good Christians or attain salvation unless they modified their societies drastically along prescribed Western lines. People in quest of salvation were to embrace monogamy, welcome the birth of twins with joy, allow many indigenous practices and ceremonials to fall into desuetude and so on.<sup>6</sup>

Had the churches offered only the alternative of the cross and salvation, they might not have been such a disruptive force. But they offered Western education in addition, a highly attractive bait which indigenous religion could not offer. Since the peoples of the Eastern Provinces were anxious to acquire the whiteman's irresistible magic and knew this could only be done through going to school, they in time sent flocks of their children to the schools. But the churches had planned so well that the church and the school had become virtually synonymous. At times the same building served and the two purposes. Our people started cautiously at first by sending their slaves and distrusted children to school and church, just as they had acted cautiously in the sphere of politics by sending similar people forward as their chiefs. But it did not take time before this caution was discovered to be foolishness as political, economic, religious and social life came to be dominated by these former undesirables who had acquired the whiteman's magic first. After this discovery what had hitherto been a trickle into schools and churches gradually became an avalanche.

Two things require mention about these new developments. The first is that the rate of change differed according to place. The coastal communities, though the first to see the whiteman and to embrace Western education, stagnated in this century partly

5. For the economic developments during this period see chapter 25.

6. For more details see Chapter 20.

owing to difficult terrain and partly to the fact that the attention of the government, the traders and the missions came to be focused on the palm belt of the interior. Beyond this rich palm belt, in the region of Nsukka, Abakaliki and Ogoja, the rate of change was also slow. The missions were tardy in penetrating these areas. The Presbyterian mission which followed the Cross River into Abakaliki and Ogoja quite early, was far less dynamic than the Roman Catholic Mission and the Church Missionary Society. Secondly, these regions had no obvious economic produce to attract the traders in large numbers. And finally the peoples inhabiting these areas had more farm lands than those to the south of them. This meant that the factor of landlessness which forced many in the palm belt to go to school in order to find government jobs or to take to commercial life was absent. Since the political and economic centre of gravity of the Eastern Provinces thus lay in the palm belts of Igbo and Ibibio land, the problems of these areas came to be taken as the problems of the Eastern Provinces. It was also here that the most far-reaching changes took place.

The second thing about the changes is that it took time for the impact of the new forces on indigenous society to become manifest. As would be expected, the first signs of the new times were seen in the city-states of the coast before they became noticeable in the interior. By the 1890s coastal society was already experiencing severe strains. The slave populations had become restive, having imbibed the new social doctrines of the churches and tasted the new economic opportunities which the traders and the government offered. Some of them started deserting the houses, thus undermining the political and economic position of the house heads. The government tried vainly to control this trend by passing various legislations, the most famous (or is it infamous?) of which was the House Rule Proclamation of 1901. These legislations sought to strengthen the position of the coastal chiefs and to preserve their control over their members. But the tide of the new forces could not be stemmed. The churches, the humanitarians and the traders kicked and protested against some of these measures and in 1915 secured the repeal of the House Rule law. This only made the situation worse. Coastal society became so agitated that it provided a fertile ground for a revivalist movement led by a local prophet from Bakana called Garrick Braide (1913-18). Since all the woes of the coastal society were blamed on the British, the movement was understandably anti-government, thus forcing the authorities to intervene by arresting the prophet. By the end of the First World War the movement had ceased to be a political threat.

Coastal society continued to be disturbed by economic, political and religious strains. The chiefs continued to bemoan the loss of their influence and wealth. But the centre of attention had already shifted to the interior which had usurped the centuries old position of the coast as the frontier of opportunity where the strong would survive and the weak go to the wall. By the end of the First World War the interior had also come to experience the social strains and stresses consequent on British rule. The old institutions and societies were being deserted and left to fall into disuse. Many who made money either invested it in new economic ventures or used it to angle for Native Court Warrants instead of using it to purchase titles or to gain admission into secret societies. As a result those who had already bought these titles and secret society memberships before the British advent came to face economic ruin. Without new entrants they could not hope to recoup their expenses.

The young men who went to school or gained from the new avenues for employment in the government, the missions and the trading houses felt they had never had it so good. But the old men and women who remained attached to the established and more familiar ways regretted every step taken in the direction of the new. They found themselves so upset psychologically by the innovations that they were prepared to attribute every disaster to the transgression of the old ways. They blamed the 1918 influenza epidemic on the British and the changes they had introduced. They claimed premature and sudden death had become rampant for similar reasons. By the beginning of the third decade of this century the tension in the Eastern Provinces had become so serious that the region witnessed in 1926 and 1927 revivalist movements, the earlier one affecting the Igbo provinces, and the later one the Ibibio areas. In a sense, the Women's Riot of 1929/30 was the climax of such movements.

In retrospect, all these tensions could be seen as the birth pangs of the new society in the Eastern Provinces. Slowly but steadily the new trends became observable, and gained dominance over the old. The slave trade declined almost to a point of vanishing completely, its position being taken by the oil trade. The latter attracted many young men. It required little capital and no elaborate organization like the oracle systems associated with the earlier trade. All that a man needed was enough money to buy a few empty kerosene tins, some sacks and if possible a bicycle and he could join the middle-man trade in palm oil and kernel. With his bicycle he conveyed what he purchased from the women to the buying stations which the trading firms had established at strategic points on the roads, railways and rivers. One can still locate such points, even though they may no longer exist, by the fact that they are still referred to as 'beach'. A few of the 'beaches' which were particularly well located at cross-roads or government or railway stations developed into markets or even into nuclei urban centres.

After the educational revolution, the next in importance for the Eastern Provinces was the urban revolution. Until the coming of British rule most of the peoples of the Eastern Provinces lived in rural communities, unlike the Yoruba to the west and the Hausa to the north. But under the impact of British rule urban centres developed amongst the Igbo and their neighbours. Most of these centres started as administrative headquarters, that is they were first centres where the District Officers and their staff of clerks, interpreters, policemen, messengers, prison warders and so on lived. Being nearly always all strangers, these men had to depend on the surrounding rural population for their livelihood. They also made use of rural labour to build their quarters and maintain their surroundings. Coming and going developed between the rural villages and the administrative centres as people came to sell to the strangers or to answer the calls of the political officer or to attend court or to do political labour at these centres. As time went on a few of the local people came to settle close to the government stations to be better able to exploit the economic opportunities they offered.

Those centres which, apart from being government headquarters, were also important economically outstripped many of their counterparts. This was so in the case of Aba and Umuahia which also had the advantage of lying on the railway and of Onitsha which was strategically located on the Niger—an ancient commercial highway. But not all the urban centres in the Eastern Provinces started as government

stations. In fact the two most important—Port Harcourt and Enugu—were at first of no consequence from the administrative point of view.

About 1908 coal was discovered at Enugu thus raising the question of how mined coal could be evacuated by sea. Attention turned first to Calabar, but this thought was soon suppressed in view of the obvious difficulties of linking Calabar with Enugu by rail. The search for an alternative led to the founding of Port Harcourt. Development started in 1913 and by 1915 the railway line from Port Harcourt had reached the Enugu coalfields. With this Port Harcourt started on its career of rapid growth—thanks to the railway line and the harbour. Enugu, on its side, started as a mining camp and owed its growth to this fact. But this was so important that it soon overshadowed what was its administrative capital—Udi, and by 1929 Enugu had become important enough to be made the headquarters of the Southern Provinces.

However it came about, urbanization proved a powerful catalyst among the peoples of the Eastern Provinces, ranking only second to formal schools as a means of educating and enlightening people. Many who had no opportunity to go to school or who went to school but dropped out prematurely went to the new urban centres where they became enlightened by what might be called on-the-job training. It was these men, these 'sons abroad' or 'abroadians', as they are called in local slang, who started the movement for the formation of town and village unions. By the middle forties these unions were starting to make their influence felt in the villages. Apart from helping their members retain their bearing in the strange anonymous society of the towns, and providing a forum for helping fellow townsmen in need, the village unions formed a channel by which the 'abroadians' brought to their villages the desirable new things they had heard and seen in the urban towns.<sup>7</sup> In this way the unions not only played a very important role in the development and transformation of the Eastern Provinces during colonial rule but have continued to do so since independence.

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7. For the Progressive Unions see chapter 27.

## THE WESTERN PROVINCES UNDER COLONIAL RULE

A. I. ASIWAJU

Bounded by the Gulf of Benin of the Atlantic Ocean in the south, the Niger Delta in the east, the Ilorin emirate in the north and the Nigeria-Dahomey boundary in the west, the region under consideration comprises the areas of present-day Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and Bendel States. The term, 'Western Provinces', was formally applied to the entire region in 1939 when the administration of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, created in 1906, was reorganized into two main groups of provinces, with the 'eastern provinces' approximating to the areas of present-day Rivers, Imo, Anambra and Cross River States.<sup>1</sup> The reorganization of 1939 left seven constituent provinces within the Western group, viz, Colony (Lagos), Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ibadan, Ondo, Benin and Warri (Delta Province in 1952) all of which evolved into what later became the Western Region of Nigeria by virtue of the constitutional arrangements of 1951. From this date to 1963, when the Mid-Western Region was created, the 'Western Provinces' remained a coherent administrative and political unit.

While administrative convenience was the chief determinant, the grouping of this area into one local government unit could not have been unaffected by the fact of a pre-existing web of local relationships. Culturally, the region forms more or less a complex. The Yoruba-speaking peoples, who constitute the bulk of the population of the Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Ondo States, cherish claims of important geneological and linguistic connections with the Edo and Itsekiri who today form the dominant groups in the Bendel State.<sup>2</sup> Kingship was a common political institution; and except for the Urhobo and the Kwale Igbo who were organized into clans, all the others—the Yoruba, the Edo, the Itsekiri, the Igbo of Agbor—were organized into kingdoms centred on an Oba, Olu or Obi. The origins of the kingship institution in the various places is traced commonly to either Ife or Benin. Political interaction was also a dominant feature of pre-colonial history. Ife-Oyo influence on the establishment of the Eweka dynasty in Benin is widely acknowledged in Benin oral traditions. A more integrating force was Benin dominance or influence over the peoples in all parts of the

1. Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria*, (London, 1958 Impression), p. 213.

2. S. Johnson, *A History of the Yorubas*, (Lagos, 1921). J. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* (Ibadan, 1960) and R.E. Bradbury and P.C. Lloyd, *The Benin Kingdom and Edo Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria* (London 1957).



present-day Bendel State<sup>3</sup> and over the eastern and coastal Yoruba chiefdoms in the Ekiti, Owo and Akoko as well as in the Awori and related Anago chiefdoms such as Ado-Odo, Igbesa and Ipokia in the southern parts of the Egbadho division of the Ogun State and the related Awori groups within the present confines of Lagos State.<sup>4</sup> The integration by the British of the area into one administrative unit simply confirmed these pre-existing links and relationships.

### The Establishment of British Rule

The events which culminated in the establishment of British rule over the area under discussion resulted from the European imperial expansion in Africa, which reached a climax in many places in the last quarter of the 19th century. With reference to the Western Provinces of Nigeria, the imposition of British rule was effected from two main bases, viz., Lagos and the Niger Delta.

### The British Penetration of Yorubaland

The establishment of British political control over Yorubaland took place in consequence of the extension of the Lagos colonial frontier. In this region indications of British political ambition assumed a definite shape in 1851 when, on charges of intransigency against King Kosoko of Lagos in the outlawed trans-Atlantic slave trade, Britain bombarded the island and, ten years later, annexed it to the British Crown.<sup>5</sup>

But however relevant the slave trade argument, its significance as a factor in the establishment of European colonial rule must be related to considerations of British commercial interests and the associated hostility against the African middlemen in the area. Admittedly, the creation of the Crown Colony of Lagos took place at a time when most European governments including that of Britain were opposed to territorial acquisition or expansion in Africa. However, local factors operating in and around Lagos stimulated developments in a direction contrary to what official policy indicated. Apart from the discovery soon after the annexation that Lagos without the vast Yoruba hinterland was nothing but "a mere town upon a sandy island, insignificant in itself . . ."<sup>6</sup>, considerations such as the presence of other rival European, mainly French, interests and the need for a stable public peace in the then war-torn Yoruba interior, all compelled the expansion of the Lagos frontier in the interest of a more complete domination of trade.<sup>7</sup>

3. The Benin kingdom embraced present-day Ishan and Afenmai divisions of Benin Province while connection with Benin still forms a major reference in the tradition of the Urhobo, the Itsekiri and the Igbo of Agbor. For a reference, see O. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry* (London, 1969), chapter 1.

4. See S.A. Akintoye, "The North-eastern District of the Yoruba Country and the Benin Kingdom," *J.H.S.N.*, IV, 4, 1969 and A.I. Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule, 1889-1945. A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism* (forthcoming by Longman), p. 19.

5. For an analysis of this episode, see J.F. Ade. Ajayi, "The British Occupation of Lagos, 1851-1861: A Critical Review", *Nigeria*, 69, August, 1961.

6. See Colonial Office (C.O.) 147/4, Glover to New Castle, 6 November 1863—quoted in A.B. Aderibigbe "Expansion of the Lagos Protectorate, 1863-1900", (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1959), p. 14.

7. For a full account, see Aderibigbe, *op. cit.*, and C.W. Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers*, (Oxford, 1961).

In this expansion, which ultimately extended British colonial control over the entire Yorubaland, the crucial years were 1862-93, during the governorships of John Glover and Gilbert Carter in Lagos. In this bid for expansion, not only was the British imperialist goaded on by trading nationals along the coast, he was as well actively supported by Christian missionaries—expatriates and Africans alike—who believed that the chances for the evangelization of the African lay in the breakdown of the traditional systems and processes and the substitution of Western civilization.

As elsewhere in Nigeria and other parts of Africa, the two main methods of British imperial expansion in Yorubaland were treaty-making and military conquest. But in spite of episodes such as the bombardment of Lagos in 1851 and the Ijebu expedition of 1892, it is especially important to emphasize that protectorate treaties with indigenous African authorities and a series of international agreements with France, more than outright military subjugation, characterized the process of British imperial establishment in Yorubaland.

With reference to the expansion of Lagos Colony by treaty, the beginning was made by Governor Freeman, John Glover's predecessor in office, who "to avoid the inevitable diversion of trade from Lagos . . . extended British sovereignty over the neighbouring 'free ports' of Badagry, Palma and Lekki".<sup>8</sup> The expansion west and north-west of the Colony was to be more actively pursued by John Glover whose vision was especially affected by the presence of the French in Porto Novo who, in reaction to the British claims over Badagry, had extended their influence to as near as Apa, a few miles west of Badagry. Glover not only consolidated British hold on Badagry by a further treaty in 1863 he also seized on the opportunity offered by the direct request made by the authorities of Ipokia, Oke-Odan and Ado in the southern parts of present-day Eghado division, who were making a bid to solve the problem of the Dahomey-Egba invasions of their area, to declare the three chiefdoms as British protectorates.

This phase of the development, which was strongly influenced by rivalry with the French or what Professor A.B. Aderibigbe has aptly called the "Scramble" in miniature,<sup>9</sup> culminated in an Anglo-French convention whereby the Yewa River was agreed as the line of partition between the French and British spheres in south-western Yorubaland. Although the British protectorates, like those of the French, were soon after abandoned in consequence of ultimate disapproval of the British and French home governments, the events in Nigeria prepared the way for the eventual imposition of British rule over these and other parts of Yorubaland in the era of official imperial expansion which, in the area under study, coincided with the governorship of Gilbert Carter in the 1890s.

In this second phase of expansion, the development of British interest in Yorubaland was favoured both by contemporary European diplomacy and the belligerent conditions in the Yoruba interior. An important element in the first was the Anglo-French Agreement of 10 August 1889 which defined the present-day Nigeria-Dahomey boundary south of latitude 9°N, leaving all parts of Yorubaland east of the line to British initiative.<sup>10</sup> The chances for effective occupation by

8. Aderibigbe, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

10. The details of this Agreement are found in J.D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, (London, 1963) and B.I. Obichere, *West African States and European Expansion*. (Stanford, 1971).

diplomacy were finally offered by conditions created by the 19th century warfare in Yorubaland, accelerated in the 1880s by the Ekitiparapo-Ibadan confrontation in the Kiriji War and the increased tempo of Dahomean invasion in western Yorubaland.<sup>11</sup> The latter situation led to a renewal of requests by the Egbado and related groups for British protection and the eventual declaration of a British protectorate over Ilaro, Ado, Igbesa, Oke-odan and Ipokia by the Acting Governor G.L. Denton early in August 1891.<sup>12</sup> British mediation in the Kiriji War, beginning in the 1880s, ended with protectorate treaties, negotiated by Gover G. Carter in 1893 with Abeokuta, Oyo and Ibadan as well as with Ekitiparapo which embraced Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and practically all the groups in eastern Yorubaland.<sup>13</sup>

### The British in the Western Niger Delta

While the officers of the Lagos administration moved rapidly to bring Yorubaland under British control, their counterparts in the service of the Niger Coast Protectorate (Oil Rivers Protectorate up to 1891) took similar steps to extend British sovereignty over the area of the present-day Bendel State. In 1894, for reasons similar to the forceful removal of Kosoko from the Lagos throne in 1851, British political ambition in the Niger Delta led to the deportation of Nana, the Itsekiri headchief of Ebrohimi and the resultant imposition of British rule over Itsekiri-land.<sup>14</sup> The Benin expedition in 1897, which resulted from a combination of the need to retrieve a badly injured British prestige and hopes for the establishment of a rubber estate, not only brought the ancient Benin kingdom under the Union Jack<sup>15</sup> but also removed the last of the huddles in the way of direct access of the British trader to the interior. As Chief Salubi has explained, it was the removal of Nana of Itsekiri and Oba Ovonramwen of Benin in 1894 and 1897 respectively that accelerated the pace of the extension by treaty of British authority over the Urhobo country, begun in 1889 when the British concluded a treaty of protection with Abraka.<sup>16</sup>

### Development and Pattern of British Rule

The piecemeal fashion of British acquisition of the Western Provinces explains the separate rather than unified development of administrative control. British rule began

11. See S.A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland* (London, 1971) and J.A. Atanda, "Dahomean Raids on Oke Ogun Towns, 1881-1890: An Episode in 19th Century Yoruba-Dahomey Relations" *Historia, Journal of the Historical Society of University of Ibadan*. Vol. III. (April 1966).
12. For references on British imperial expansion in the area of present-day Egbado Division, see Aderibigbe, op. cit. Kola Folayan, 'Egbado and Yoruba-Aja Power Politics, 1832-1894'. (Unpublished Ibadan M.A. thesis 1967) and Newbury, op. cit.
13. J.A. Atanda, "The Search for Peace in Yorubaland, 1881-1893", Irvin and Bonner Graduate Prize Essay in History, University of Ibadan, 1966 (Unpublished).
14. O. Ikime, "Nigeria-Ebrohimi", in M. Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance*, (London, 1971).
15. P.A. Igbafe, "Benin Under British Rule, 1897-1938: A Study in Institutional Adaptation", (Ph.D. Ibadan, 1968).
16. A. Salubi, "The Establishment of British Administration in the Urhobo Country (1891-1913) *J.H.S.N.* 1, 3, 1958.

at different dates in different parts of the Nigerian territory west of the Niger. While a definite start was made in Lagos in 1862, when Governor H.S. Freeman was placed in charge, in the vast Yoruba interior the dates ranged from 1891 as in Ilaro and other related western Yoruba towns to 1894 when Captain R.R. Bower, appointed Resident over Ibadan in 1893, established a military garrison on the Otin River, thus introducing British rule to Ekiti and other parts of eastern Yorubaland. In the case of the Egba, even a much later date may have to be found as formal British rule over the region had to wait the abrogation in 1914 of the independence clause included in the Anglo-Egba treaty of 1892. Also while the Itsekiri effectively came under British rule in 1894, the area of the Benin kingdom did not taste of this experience until the conquest of 1897. Similarly even if, as has been noted, Abraka chiefs had signed a treaty of protection with the British in 1889, British sovereignty was not effectively extended over Urhobo country until the second half of the 1890s.

A more serious factor making for variation relates to the distinct administrative types imposed by the British. In the Western Provinces, there were two major juridical spheres. Lagos territory, including the Island and the adjacent districts of Badagry, Ikorodu and Epe, was administered in the tradition of a British Crown Colony while the vast interior, acquired either by conquest or treaty, fell under the British protectorate type. Even so, the style of the Protectorate in the Yoruba interior was sufficiently distinguishable from the pattern in the Benin and Delta Provinces of Western Nigeria.

#### **The Administration of Lagos Colony**

Lagos, as a crown colony, was, to start with, administered as a separate territorial unit with a governor of its own.<sup>17</sup> In 1866, however, the Governor of Lagos was reduced to the rank of an 'administrator', and was placed under the control of the Governor of all British West African settlements seated in Sierra Leone. In 1874, the administrator of Lagos assumed the title of Lieutenant-Governor and was subordinate to the Governor of the Gold Coast. Separate existence was recovered in 1886 when, largely in consideration of a new expansionist drive advocated by Joseph Chamberlain, a full governor assumed responsibility for the administration of the colony. For the purpose of making the administration adequately effective, the colonial territory was split into four districts, viz., the metropolitan area centred on the Lagos Island, the western district based in Badagry, the north-eastern district centred on Ikorodu and the eastern district with headquarters at Epe. This division approximated to that of the present-day Lagos State.

The formulation of government policy in the Lagos Colony was a function of the Governor acting with the advice of the Legislative Council, constituted shortly after the annexation of 1861. To this was added in 1886 an Executive Council. While the first body always had a few African members sitting on it, initially by official nomination but as from 1923 by election, the other remained exclusively an official council until 1942.<sup>18</sup> In practice, the Governor of Lagos always had recourse to these

17. For a résumé of the account of the development of British administrative control of Lagos Colony, see Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

18. T.N. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*, (Longman, 1972), Chapter 5.

two bodies; he was, however, not statutorily bound by their decisions. The Governor enjoyed considerable initiative, subject only to approvals of the British Secretary of State for the Colonies who was responsible to the British Parliament.

Execution of policies was effected through various departments headed and directed by expatriates assisted by qualified African auxiliaries. These included the departments of Customs, Medical and Sanitary Services, Police, Prisons, Public Works, Lagos Railway, Government Vessels, Harbour, Post Office and Education.<sup>19</sup> The Chief Justice presided over the Supreme Court in Lagos and, of course, headed the entire judiciary of the colony. In the outlying districts, government functioned through District Commissioners assisted by local detachments of the colonial police force.

The Crown Colony administration did not accord indigenous political authorities any formal powers. The annexation of Lagos conferred the status of 'British subjects' on all the inhabitants who therefore strictly owed no allegiance to any authority other than the British Crown, represented by the Governor-in-Council. The ideal was for the administrator to reach the subject peoples directly. In the other districts of the Colony, local *oba* and *bale*, where and when they were appointed as government agents, functioned strictly as stipendiary administrative assistants without much formally sanctioned initiative of their own.

However, practical problems such as the perennial shortage of the necessary personnel and lack of adequate funds militated against direct administration. In this circumstance, the need for an intermediary organ of government was always apparent to the Lagos Colony administration in its bid to communicate with the subject population and so facilitate the peoples' co-operation with government. This was the situation which compelled the passing in November 1901 of William MacGregor's Native Council Ordinance which led to the creation of Native Councils including the Central Native Council in Lagos.<sup>20</sup> MacGregor's steps in this regard were guided by the experience of his predecessors especially William McCallum who, for considerations similar to those of MacGregor, had inaugurated a Native Advisory Board in 1897 on the rubrics of the office of the Agent for Native Affairs created in 1895.<sup>21</sup> Presided over by the Governor himself and made up of the traditional White Cap Chiefs of Lagos as well as other titled men and leaders from the other districts of the Colony, the Central Native Council, untill its disappearance in the wake of Sir Frederick Lugard's amalgamation scheme on the eve of the First World War, functioned as a forum where government sounded the opinion of the traditional élite and where the local chiefs themselves had frank discussions with the administration in respect of its various policies and measures.

Limited by the application of British law and legal procedure as well as by the debates of the Legislative Council, the deliberations of the Central Native Council and the activities of unofficial but yet vocal organizations such as the Aborigines Protection Society and the newspaper press all of which were concentrated in Lagos, the Crown

19. I.F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960: Men, Methods and Myths*, Oxford, 1969, p. 53.

20. Tamuno, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-171.

21. *Ibid.*



Colony administration in the territory could not but be what Professor T.N. Tamuno has aptly described as a "mild autocracy".<sup>22</sup> This British colonial administrative system, founded during the crucial years preceding Frederick Lugard's governorship in Nigeria, remained more or less in vogue until the Macpherson Constitution of 1951.

### The Administration of Lagos Protectorate

British rule in the Lagos Protectorate was, in spite of its relationship and similarity to the pattern in the Colony, clearly distinguishable from the latter. Lagos was the base of the administration of the protectorate and the administrators charged with the affairs of the different districts into which Yorubaland was eventually organized were also officers of the Lagos administration; hence the term 'Travelling Commissioners', initially applied to British administrators in charge of the various districts of the protectorate. Overall control from Lagos also implied the extension of certain aspects of the Crown Colony type into the Protectorate. Thus, the British Travelling Commissioner or the 'Resident', as he later came to be called, was in the performance of his duties of administration guided by the ordinances of the Governor in Lagos to whom he also rendered the account of his activities. As in administrative affairs, the Commissioner or Resident in the judicial sphere functioned as an officer of the Supreme Court in Lagos. Similarly, the newspaper press and other moderating influences in the Lagos Colony administration took interest in the affairs of the Yoruba interior.

But despite these links which enabled influences of the 'mild autocracy' in Lagos to penetrate the Yoruba interior, British administration of the protectorate proceeded along distinct lines. An initial distinction relates to the personal status of subject peoples in the two administrative spheres. While the Yoruba in the Crown Colony were 'British subjects', their kinsmen in the protectorate were in law not 'subjects' but 'British-protected persons' under the régime of local laws and customs which were accorded statutory recognition, subject only to a manner of operation not "repugnant to British idea of justice". Because British law was statutorily excluded from the protectorate, the administrator enjoyed a much larger initiative in the day-to-day handling of the affairs in his area. Administration tended to be more oppressive. British autocracy in the practical situation of the Yoruba interior was, as will be made clear presently, far less 'mild' than in the Lagos Colony.

In organizing the effective administration of Yorubaland, one initial problem concerned the arrangement of administrative boundaries. In this regard, the western boundary, i.e., the one arranged with the French in Dahomey, would appear the earliest to be settled amicably.<sup>23</sup> But at two points, Ilorin and Otun Ekiti, the boundary between the Yoruba protectorate and Northern Nigeria engendered a prolonged controversy between the northern and southern Nigerian administrations. The dispute was not finally resolved until 1936 when Otun was returned to the Ekiti division of Western Nigeria.<sup>24</sup> Similarly the definition of the eastern boundary involved the administrations of the Lagos Colony and Protectorate, the Royal Niger

22. Ibid., Chapter 4.

23. J.C. Anene, *The Nigeria International Boundaries*, Longman, 1970, Chapter 3.

24. Akintoye, *Revolution* . . . p. 221, and Tamuno, p. 230.

Company and the Niger Coast Protectorate in bitter conflicts which were settled only with the merger of the three southern Nigerian administrations in 1906.<sup>25</sup> Lagos Protectorate, like the Colony, was divided into districts, the number of which varied from time to time. The western district, which embraced the present-day Egbado division, was in turn based at Badagry, Imeko and Ilaro.<sup>26</sup> Ibadan, Oyo and Ife areas were, on the other hand, constituted into the central district with headquarters in Ibadan. Ekiti and Ijesa made up the north-eastern district based in turn at Ilesha and Ado-Ekiti, while Owo, Idanre, Ondo, Akure, Okitipupa and Ilaje formed the eastern district with its seat in Ode Ondo.<sup>27</sup> Most of these districts had been formed by 1900 and each staffed with a British Commissioner assisted by a local detachment of the colonial police. The Ijebu region was also placed under a District Commissioner. In Abeokuta, where the Egba United Government continued to maintain a tenuous independence till 1914, the Railway Commissioner functioned more or less as the Travelling Commissioners elsewhere. In 1914, all of the administrative districts were reorganized into Provinces and the title 'Resident' was substituted for 'Commissioner'.

British rule in the Yoruba hinterland would appear to have evolved through three principal phases. The first, which lasted from the various starting points to the amalgamation of 1914, was paramilitary in character. To this phase belonged episodes such as the bombardment of Oyo and the associated degradation of Alafin Adeyemi I by Captain Bower<sup>28</sup> and the oppression of traditional authority in Ilesha, leading to the thirty-seven day banishment of the Owa of Ijesaland to Benin by Sir Walter Egerton, Governor of Lagos, in 1905.<sup>29</sup> Detailed local studies now available on Egbado, Oyo, Ijebu, and Ekiti emphasize the coercive nature of British administration in the western, central, southern and eastern parts of the protectorate.<sup>30</sup> In this phase, colonial rule operated within the limited objective of keeping just the peace required for British trade to prosper. The initial authoritarian approach was recommended ostensibly because of the military situation in Yorubaland which, as it were, might have been considered as requiring only an iron hand to restore to normalcy. Besides, the basically military mode of British colonization in all the surrounding areas, notably the Northern and the Eastern Provinces,<sup>31</sup> meant that most of the British men initially available for colonial administration were drawn principally from the corps of officers of the invading army. What then remained for an authoritarian rule to emerge was provided by the formal exclusion from the Yoruba interior of institutions such as the Legislative Council which normally moderated the conduct of British rule in the Colony area.

25. Tamuno, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

26. Asiwaju, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3.

27. Akintoye, *Revolution . . .*, pp. 219-20 and his 'Obas of the Ekitiparapo Confederation Under Colonial Rule and Independence', in M. Crowder and O. Ikime (eds.), *West African Chiefs*, University of Ife Press 1970.

28. J.A. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire*, London, 1973, Chapter 11.

29. Tamuno, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-180.

30. For case studies of Ijebu and Ekiti, see the chapters by E.A. Ayandele and S.A. Akintoye respectively in *West African Chiefs*. For the Oyo case, see Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire*, chapter 2. The Egbado case is covered in Asiwaju, *op. cit.*, chapter 4.

31. See chapters 22 and 24 of the present volume for details of Northern and Eastern Provinces respectively.

Thus, in spite of the policy pursued by William MacCullum and William MacGregor, successive Governors of Lagos from 1895 to 1903, in favour of greater and more responsible involvement of indigenous political authorities in the work of local administration, British rule in Yorubaland prior to 1914 was characterized by official domination. The Native Councils and Courts, established on the basis of MacGregor's Native Council Ordinance of 1901, were invariably presided over in many parts of the Yoruba interior by the District Commissioners with the indigenous chiefs participating essentially as nominated members.

An important consequence of the coercion which characterized British administration at this initial stage was a drastic and widespread erosion of the Yoruba traditional political authority. In the administrative, as well as in judicial sphere, the indigenous rulers lost in status and prestige from the extension into the Protectorate of the institution of stipendiary chieftaincy prevalent in the Lagos Colony. In the western district, as in the north-eastern district, where a commonly acknowledged central kingdom was lacking, the stipendiary chieftaincy was especially epitomized by the appointment and career of Seriki Abass, a Badagry-based Egbado merchant and Muslim leader of late 19th-century fame, who acted as the 'paramount chief' for the district from c. 1904 to his death in June 1919.<sup>32</sup> The initiative and scope for independent action formerly enjoyed by Yoruba rulers were further curtailed by the practice of posting colonial policemen to take charge of the leading towns in the absence of the Travelling Commissioner. The damage which this initial paramilitary régime did to the Yoruba kingship institution was not made good until the introduction of Lugard's style of Indirect Rule.

In 1914, British rule in Yorubaland entered the second of its three major phases when, in an attempt to bring the region within a uniform administrative system, Sir Frederick Lugard, the first Governor-General, consciously extended to the Southern Provinces the emirate-based type of administration, popularly known as Indirect Rule, which he had tried in the Northern Provinces with a considerable measure of success. In the Yoruba area, where the indigenous kingship institution fulfilled the same condition of success for Indirect Rule as the emirates of the North, Lugard's policy worked out merely to consolidate the intentions of his predecessors such as MacCullum and MacGregor both of whom had wished for an administrative machinery in which the Obaship institution could be used to the advantage of British colonial control of Yorubaland. Through the implementation of provisions contained in the Native Courts Ordinance in 1914 and the Native Authority Ordinance two years later, when direct taxation was authorized, the Lugard government conferred greater administrative and judicial responsibility upon recognized oba and bale and placed their work on a more secure financial basis. Under the new arrangement, the 'native authorities', as the oba and bale came to be called, replaced British Commissioners as presidents of the recognized Native Courts and Councils. The new position restored to the obaship institution much of the prestige it lost under the preceding order.

However, in Yorubaland as elsewhere, the new system, like the old, operated under a British superstructure which consisted of the Governor of Nigeria at the apex of the hierarchy. Below him were the Lieutenant-Governor of Southern Nigeria, the

32. Asiwaju, *op. cit.*, chapter 4 and Newbury, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-97.

Residents of Provinces, the District Officers in charge of the divisions together with the European-officered army and police. Government policies relating to finance, health, education, agriculture, forestry, and other responsibilities were channelled through appropriate departments staffed by both administrative and technical personnel at the central secretariat and deployed as appropriate in the interior. At the local level, the work of co-ordination of the various departments was basically the responsibility of the administrator in charge. In Yorubaland, the essence of Indirect Rule rested on the instruction of such a local administrator to act through the recognized 'native authority'.

Beginning with Oyo Province, which served as the premier area of the Lugardian Indirect Rule in Yorubaland, signs and indications of an administrative overhauling became apparent in 1930. There were many factors which brought about this reorganization, aimed principally at democratizing the Lugard-type of Indirect Rule. These, as Dr Atanda has explained, included the arrival of Sir Donald Cameron a Governor whose views about Indirect Rule differed from Lugard's.<sup>33</sup> There was also the anxiety to prevent the type of confrontation which the colonial régime faced in the course of a series of armed revolts such as the Anti-Tax Riot in Warri in 1927-28 and the Women's Riot in Aba in 1929. Within Yorubaland itself reorganization was called for by the need to rectify the strains arising from the overcentralization imposed by the practice of Indirect Rule in many parts. In Yorubaland, where numerous autonomous kingdoms characterized the political scene prior to the establishment of British rule, the new administrative districts based on the Indirect Rule system tended to create an artificial centralization which bred discontent in many parts, the Ibadan-Oyo case being one of the best known examples.<sup>34</sup> Other factors related to excessive concentration of authority in the hand of recognized 'native authorities' and the agitation of educated élite against their exclusion from the operation of Indirect Rule. The effect of all these considerations was a reorganization beginning with the Oyo area in the 1930s and affecting all the other parts of Yorubaland in the 1940s and early 1950s. This reorganization, which ushered in the third and final phase of colonial rule, prepared the way for the establishment of democratically elected local councils which were eventually set up in accordance with the provisions of the Western Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952.

### British Rule in the Benin and Delta Provinces

The identification of three main phases in the evolution of British rule in Yorubaland is, at least broadly, also applicable to both Benin and the Niger Delta. However, the details varied sufficiently to warrant a separate treatment. In the area of the present-day Bendel State of Nigeria, for example, the style of British rule was on the whole more coercive or authoritarian than in the Yoruba hinterland. Until 1906, when all the three British administrations in Southern Nigeria were merged, the control of what later became the Benin and Delta Provinces of Western Nigeria belonged to the Niger (formerly Oil Rivers) Protectorate which also embraced the area of the Eastern

33. J.A. Atanda, "Indirect Rule in Yorubaland", *Tarikh*, 3, 3, 1970.

34. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire*, Chapter 6.

provinces.<sup>35</sup> From 1906 to 1914, the western Niger Delta districts were administered as the Central Provinces of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

Several reasons explain the more coercive tone of administration in the Benin and Delta Provinces. First, the sheer physical distance from Lagos reduced considerably the influence of the formal and informal institutions which made for moderation in the administration of both the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos which were continuously placed. On the other hand, Benin and the Niger Delta districts were rather close to the military oligarchy imposed by the British rulers of the Niger Coast Protectorate. Since the mode of colonization rested principally on military conquest, as evident in Benin and the vast interior of the Eastern Provinces, the resultant administration could hardly be expected to be anything other than martial. This was so especially as British conquest on both sides of the Niger Delta was nearly everywhere followed by widespread and persistent resistance, necessitating armed patrols and other repressive measures on the part of the colonial authorities. It is significant, for example, that the three Coercion Ordinances—the Collective Punishment, Unsettled Districts and Peace Preservation—passed in Lagos in 1912 were all designed specifically with the Central and the Eastern Provinces of Southern Nigeria in mind.<sup>36</sup>

In Benin, a virtually martial administration followed the British conquest of 1897. In the absence of the Oba Ovonramwen, who had been deported to Calabar, a 'native council' was inaugurated in 1897, the same year which witnessed the creation of the first of this type of council in Yorubaland, that of Ibadan.<sup>37</sup> The Vice-Consul, as the British political officer in charge of the area was then called, was the president and member chiefs such as the *Oshodi*, *Osagwe*, *Ehondo*, *Obiahiagbon*, *Iyase*, etc., all of whom were appointed at different times in the course of the year, were nominated on the basis of proven loyalty to the British Crown rather than on any pre-existing order. As in Yorubaland, the 'native council' combined legislative, judicial and executive functions. To complement the work of the council in the outlying districts, loyal Benin chiefs were appointed as 'paramount chiefs' who functioned in the fashion of the pre-1914 stipendiary 'district headmen' in most of the districts of the Lagos Colony and Protectorate. In the Niger Delta, initially administered as the Western Vice-Consulate of the Niger Coast Protectorate, the Itsekiri, the Urhobo and other groups were governed by the Consul-General through a Vice-Consul, supported by a detachment of the protectorate police and presiding over the 'native councils' and 'paramount chiefs', inaugurated in the area on the same basis as those in Benin.<sup>38</sup>

Admittedly, British approach to the administration of Benin and the Delta Provinces of Western Nigeria was, prior to 1914, everything but traditional; and, based on the better known definition of the British concept of Indirect Rule, which emphasized the indigenous political institutions as the pivot of the system, the British administration in the more easterly provinces of Western Nigeria was, as has been

35. See chapter 24 below.

36. Tamuno, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

37. For an easy comparison of British Indirect Rule in Benin and Yorubaland, see P.A. Igbafe, 'Indirect Rule in Benin' and J.A. Atanda, 'Indirect Rule in Yorubaland', both articles in *Tarikh*, III, 3, 1970.

38. Salubi, *op. cit.*



argued by both Igbafe and Ikime, very far from being indirect.<sup>39</sup> The 'native councils' in Benin and Warri, like those in the various Yoruba centres in the pre-1914 era, were nothing but a misrepresentation of the traditional usage in the various localities; and, as demonstrated by the careers of Chief Agho Obaseki in Benin and Chief Dogho in the Niger Delta, who both compared favourably with Seriki Abass in the British administration of the western district of Lagos Protectorate to 1919, the experiment tended to bring to the forefront of local affairs men who, though of proven ability, lacked the backing of local custom to be rulers in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The dominance of the British political officer everywhere eclipsed the real indigenous rulers and accelerated the decline in the power and status they had enjoyed.

The introduction of Lugard's system in 1914 was expected, among other things, to resolve the problem of political discontent which had arisen in many places in Benin and Delta Provinces out of the strains created by the preceding local government practice. However, a critical analysis of Indirect Rule in both areas shows that there was little or no difference between the pre- and post-1914 conduct of British administration in the two provinces. In both Benin and the Delta, the emirate type of Indirect Rule faced insurmountable operational difficulties arising basically from the carry-over of aspects of the pre-1914 direct type, and complicated in the case of the Niger Delta by the extension of the obnoxious Warrant Chief system to the politically segmentary Urhobo and Kwale Igbo as well as the Itsekiri.

In Benin, although the Indirect Rule policy led to the restoration of the kingship, Aguobasimi, son and successor of Ovonramwen, who chose the throne name of Eweka II, was shorn of effective power.<sup>40</sup> The administering British officers leaned more on Chief Agho Obaseki, the Benin strong chief in the pre-1914 era, who was eventually appointed by the British to the post of the *Iyase*, the office next in command to that of the *Oba* in the Benin power hierarchy. Until his death in 1920, the new *Iyase*, rather than the *Oba*, presided over the two 'native courts' in Benin city in his capacity as the District Headchief for Benin district. In Benin, unlike in the Yoruba area where *obas* such as the *Alafin* of Oyo and the *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode in their capacity as 'native authorities' presided over the central council of their areas, the British Resident continued in the tradition of the Vice-Consuls and Commissioners of the preceding era to preside over the regular meetings of the Central Council. In the various districts into which the main administrative divisions of Benin were divided, the 'district heads' exercised power over areas which usually extended beyond their normal chiefdoms. What was more, those of Benin divisions, not to talk of the number in *Afenmai* division, functioned with little formal reference to the *Oba* of Benin. The *Oba* of Benin also lost much of the financial basis of traditional authority as revenue accruing from the direct taxation introduced in 1919 went directly to the British officer who supervised the disbursement of the percentage credited to the various 'native authorities'. By 1930, when the *Oba* of Benin was assuming the status of the kind of 'Sole Native Authority' such as the central *Yourba Oba* had assumed during the

39. For details of this argument see P.A. Igbafe, 'British Rule in Benin to 1920: Direct or Indirect?' in *J.H.S.N.* III, 4, 1967 and O. Ikime, 'Reconsidering Indirect Rule . . .'

40. Igbafe, *op. cit.*

'golden age' which dawned there with the reorganization of 1914, Benin was caught up by Sir Donald Cameron's reorganization scheme.

In the Niger Delta, the failure of Lugard's system of Indirect Rule was due to the same factors as those that operated in the Eastern Provinces. For, as among the Igbo and the Ibibio, there was among the Urhobo a conspicuous absence of indigenous chieftaincies of the emir type. The Urhobo, like the Kwale Igbo, were a politically segmentary group and, in Itsekiri, the interregnum from 1848 to 1936 had reduced the virility of the indigenous kingship institution.<sup>41</sup> In Agbor, the natural supremacy of the Obi was probably not fully appreciated until circumstances forced an investigation on the British in the early 1930s.<sup>42</sup> This cultural situation had aided the extension quite early in this century of the Warrant Chief system of Eastern Nigeria to the Warri (later Delta) Province of Western Nigeria. And in spite of Lugard's reforming ordinances, the warrant chief system persisted in the Niger Delta, thanks especially to the longevity of Chief Dogho, the number one Itsekiri warrant chief who held complete sway in the British Native Administration of the entire Itsekiri and Urhobo hinterland until his death in 1932.<sup>43</sup>

In both Benin and the Delta Provinces, then, the introduction of the Lugardian system was, despite the declared intention to build the new administrative machinery on the indigenous base, viewed in many places as a new order leading to the destruction of the traditional socio-political establishment. Apart from the initial failure in places such as the Niger Delta to discover and utilise the proper institutions, the new administrative districts hardly coincided with the traditional areas of jurisdiction of the various native authorities. As in Itsekiriland, where the centralizing influences of the kingship institution had been virtually neutralized by the interregnum of 1848-1936, the Lugardian system in the segmentary organization of Urhoboland imposed an artificial centralization. In the area of the ancient Benin kingdom, on the other hand, the tendency was towards a certain decentralization and a vindictive policy of shorning the Oba of all former powers, status and privileges. Some artificiality was also noticed in the way the appointed 'native authorities' exercised their new powers. In Urhobo and Kwale Igbo clans, there was the serious complaint to the effect that the "British transformed what was a delegatory and collective authority of elders in assembly into executive roles of individual elders appointed chiefs".<sup>44</sup> Besides, the issue of 'native treasuries' and particularly the introduction of direct taxation, both of which constituted an important cornerstone of the Lugardian system, were in Southern Nigeria major administrative innovations. The exclusion of the educated elite, which was already coming to the forefront in many parts of the area under study by the 1930s, also became a point for agitation against the Lugardian system.<sup>45</sup> Needless to say, these conditions worked up resentments against the conduct of British rule in many parts of Benin and Delta Provinces; and, in the

41. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, p. 39.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. Ikime, "The Anti-Tax Riots . . .", p. 560.

45. The educated elite factor was, for example, very strong in the Benin Water Rate Agitation of 1937/38. See P.A. Igbafe, "The Benin Water Rate Agitation, 1977-38: An Example of Social Conflict", *J.H.S.N.* IV, 3, 1968.

latter locality, popular agitation reached the culminating point in 1927/28 when the Anti-Tax Riots broke out in Warri, providing a precedent for the Aba Riot in Eastern Nigeria the following year. These developments constituted the principal motivation for the overhauling of the Lugardian system in the area of present-day Bendel State in the 1930s.

The result of this reorganization was in the British endeavour to establish colonial rule on a basis more acceptable to the people. Since one of the leading causes of resentment was the failure to build the administrative machinery on proper indigenous bases, detailed inquiries were held into the pre-colonial political systems of the various peoples. In Benin, Warri, and Agbor, where the kingship institution was found to be popularly accepted, the new reorganization was based on the Oba, the Olu (revived in 1936) and the Obi respectively. To broaden the base, town, village, village group and clan councils of wider representation were established as appropriate. In Benin, as elsewhere in the Southern Provinces, the reorganization took special note of the educated élite by allowing them adequate representation on the newly established councils. Subject to minor local changes, the resultant pattern was what the Western Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952 confirmed, and this lasted till independence in 1960.

#### Western Nigerian Responses to British Rule

In this account of the Western Provinces under British rule, it is essential to note in some detail the role of local responses in the evolution of administrative policy and practice throughout the period of European colonial domination. Every policy and the change thereof was determined not so much by the political theories of the British officer but by problems arising from the local situation, particularly the subject peoples' pattern of interaction with foreign rule. The empirical Anglo-Saxon tended generally to be more affected by local reactions than their more logical French or Portuguese counterparts elsewhere in Africa.<sup>46</sup> This point underlines the importance of subject peoples' expressed or otherwise known attitudes in the definition and redefinition of British colonial administrative measures.<sup>47</sup>

In the Western Provinces of Nigeria, local responses to British rule varied both from place to place and from time to time. The variations were necessarily affected by the variety not only of the cultures and histories of particular localities but also of the mode of colonization and the administrative types imposed by the British. One final determinant of variation rested on the character of individual administrators and persons in the particular places concerned. But all these considered, Western Nigeria under British rule provides the basic illustration of the main types of African reaction to European imperial presence and colonial rule in general; and in view of the lack of unanimity among experts as to the correct criteria for the categories of African

46. For comparisons with the French and Portuguese colonial regimes, reference can be made to Asiwaju, *op. cit.*, and James Duffy "Portuguese Africa, 1930-1960" in *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, Vol. II, ed. L. Gann and P. Duignan, Cambridge, 1971.

47. For a theoretical as well as an empirical study of this phenomenon, see R.I. Rotberg and Ali Mazrui (eds.), *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, Oxford, 1970).

resistance or protest movements, the historical approach will be adopted for our discussion here.

At the time of European penetration in Western Nigeria, as indeed in all other parts of Africa, one point of view which united the indigenous peoples in the various localities related to a common concern for their sovereignty or political independence. In Yorubaland, for example, this factor showed up not only in principal states such as Ijebu, Abeokuta and Oyo but also in Igbesa, a less significant Awori chiefdom north-west of Lagos, whose ruling class, while welcoming in 1888 a British treaty of protection in the desperate situation posed to their area by the Egba and Dahomey invasions, nevertheless raised a preliminary objection to a clause of the draft which implied their acceptance of British sovereignty.<sup>48</sup> As in Lagos in 1851 and Ijebu in 1892, Benin independence was not surrendered until the military conquest of 1897. And, as has been indicated, it was the combination of this event and the action of the British *Man-O-War* against Nana in 1894 that helped to keep open the way to eventual British penetration of Urhobo hinterland.

Thus, if the Western Provinces did not, like the Northern and Eastern Provinces, provide a spectacle of widespread resistance against the British imperialist, the people cannot be thought of as having surrendered their autonomy willingly. In Yorubaland, which constituted two-thirds of the entire area, the chances for armed confrontation with the whiteman were simply reduced by the 19th-century wars which evidently had sapped the people of much human energy and material resources. But even in places such as the present-day Egbado division, one area of Yorubaland which suffered perhaps more than others from the armed frictions of the 19th century, the peaceful mode of British colonization was conditioned by considerations for self-preservation tied up inextricably with the need to ward off the hostility of African neighbours whose persistent invasion posed a serious threat to the political and cultural identity and survival of the various groups concerned. Similarly, when the Urhobo signed treaties of protection with the British in the 1890s, most of the signatory elders did so originally to boost up the status of the group vis-à-vis the Itsekiri whose importance had been seen as linked up with early association with the whiteman and whose political ascendancy, based on the role as middlemen in the lucrative coastal trade, was fast eclipsing the importance of the Urhobo.<sup>49</sup> Preservation of local political autonomy was therefore fundamental to Western Nigerians' initial response to the British imperial presence.

In the colonial period, when the fact of British sovereignty became too real to be challenged, Western Nigerians' sense of independence continued to find expression in their qualified acceptance or outright criticism of the various administrative measures introduced by the colonial government. The people acquiesced in policies and practices which, like the Lugardian Indirect Rule in certain parts of Yorubaland, tended to coincide with some local aspirations. But where such measures operated against local interests, they were vehemently opposed.

However, such opposition or criticism took various forms depending largely on the prevailing political and cultural conditions. In the Lagos Colony, where a relatively

48. Aderibigbe, op. cit., p. 136.

49. The analysis of this Itsekiri-Urhobo relations as affected by the British colonial regime is the central theme in Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*...

high level of Westernization had been attained and where the constitutional channel was made available, Nigerian reactions and criticisms were reflected in the debates both in the Legislative Council and the Central Native Council. Since the 'mild autocracy' prevailing in the Colony was responsive to public criticism, public opinion was often harnessed through the use of the newspaper press and what Tamuno has called "monster petitions", addressed not only to British authorities on the spot but also to their superiors in London.<sup>50</sup> Through these various channels, the indigenous population in the Colony area registered their disapproval of measures such as the Seditious Offences Ordinance of 1909 and other oppressive legislation and practices affecting them directly or their kinsmen especially in the more contiguous Yoruba hinterland.

Outside the boundaries of the Colony, resentments against measures which sought to regulate the peoples' affairs through perimeters other than their own occasionally assumed violent dimensions. This point can be easily illustrated by a quick reference to popular outbursts such as the repeated Ekumeku unrest in the Asaba hinterland between 1898 and 1910, the Iseyin-Oke-Iho Rising in Oyo division in 1916, the Abeokuta Disturbances in 1918 and the Anti-Tax Riots in Warri Province in 1927/28<sup>51</sup>. While detailed studies of these revolts stress local peculiarities, they point also to certain common trends. Atanda's more recent study of the Oyo case, no less than Tamuno's of Asaba and Ikime's of the Niger Delta, shows that the incidents were much more complex than have often been imagined. Rather than the issue of direct taxation, which had earned emphasis in the older textbooks, the upheavals were protests against the sum total of grievances associated with contemporary British administrative practices and the allied inroads of Western civilization. The emphasis in the details varied from one place to another. The Ekumeku society was, for example, the medium through which the Igbo of Asaba hinterland registered their unmistakable protest against local chiefs and people "who had collaborated with the government and the Christian missions to the utter disregard of the old institutions and practices".<sup>52</sup> In the Iseyin-Oke-Iho case, discontent centred principally on the over-centralizing influences of British rule in Oyo. In Warri the so-called Anti-Tax Riot of 1927/28 was an upheaval aimed at the liquidation of the obnoxious Warrant Chief system whose operation had run contrary to the usage of the Itsekiri, the Urhobo or the Western Delta Igbo.

However, there were always other issues involved. The official report on the Abeokuta incidents of 1918, which proved surprisingly objective, illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of the popular upheavals when it concludes:

That the introduction of direct taxation cannot *per se* be regarded as a cause of the disturbances. (2) that the main causes were (a) the illegal and oppressive Sanitary fines (b) the continuance and enforcement of unpaid labour or road

50. Tamuno, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

51. Relevant studies of these incidents include Tamuno, "Some Aspects of Southern Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Rule", *J.H.S.N.* III, 2, 1965 (for the Ekumeku Movement), J.A. Atanda, "The Iseyin-Oke-Iho Rising of 1916: An Example of Socio-Political Conflict in Colonial Nigeria", *J.H.S.N.* IV, 4, 1969, and O. Ikime, "The Anti-Tax Riots".

52. Tamuno, *The Evolution of the Nigerian State*, p. 41.



construction and other works contrary to the promise given, (c) the discontent caused by the addition to the scheme of direct taxation as an integral part of it, of an important constitutional change (i.e. the creation of District Heads) which entirely altered the position of the Township Chiefs in relation to the villages and destroyed their influence, (d) the discontent caused by the fact that the assessment of Abeokuta town was in many cases unfair and excessive and that this caused co-operation between those affected in Abeokuta and the people in the villages who had other but equally legitimate grievances.<sup>53</sup>

The similarity in the events is even more clearly demonstrated by the fact that all the cases led to reorganization; and the widespread nature of the incidents was the chief determinant of a series of enquiries leading to the general overhauling, already noted, of the local government system all over Southern Nigeria in the 1930s and 1940s.

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53. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances in Abeokuta Province* 1918, p. 31.



## THE NORTHERN PROVINCES UNDER COLONIAL RULE: 1900-1959

SA'AD ABUBAKAR

Before the present century, what was formerly known as Northern Nigeria comprised a number of independent entities. The leading ones being the Sokoto Caliphate and the Borno empire. There were also a number of states, chieftaincies and innumerable communities in varying scales of political organization. These existed to the south of Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate, mainly on the central highlands and in the Niger-Benue valley.<sup>1</sup> The term *Northern Provinces* was created by the British to describe the new entity they established by conquest at the beginning of this century. In this chapter we are not so much concerned with how the British acceded to power but with the manner of their administration and its consequences on the pre-existing polities and communities. The chapter seeks to consider the changes brought about by the British in the traditional systems of government and the reaction they appear to have provoked. But these cannot be properly understood without considering how the pre-colonial society was organized and managed. Thus, this chapter begins with an outline of the pre-existing systems of government in the various areas that, as from the beginning of this century, became the British Northern Provinces. This will be followed by an examination of the development of the British system of colonial rule and its results.

## The Northern Politics on the Eve of the British Conquest

Before the British conquest there was no centralized authority exercising political power over what became the Northern Provinces, but the greater part of the area was under the Sokoto Caliph. The caliphate type of government is discussed elsewhere in this book.<sup>2</sup> What can be said here is that the Sokoto Caliphate was administered on the principle of *tafwid* (delegation of authority). The Caliph had over twenty emirs

1. The most important states include the Jukun kingdom of Wukari and the chieftaincies of Dampar, Gwona, Kam, Kona and Awei. The Chamba had also a number of chieftaincies—Gurum, Yebbi, Sugu, Dakka, Suntai and Donga. To the south of Borno, there were the Pabir kingdom of Viyu, Fika, Bedde and the Kilba state. The communities living in varying scales of political organization included the Tiv, Idoma, and the plateau ethnic groups. See chapters 8 and 9.

2. See chapter 17.

governing the emirates.<sup>3</sup> Thus, even though the Caliph was the head of the Caliphate its administration was highly decentralized. Yet, the polity was held together because the Caliph derived his legitimacy from Islam and both he and the emirs under him were merely to enforce Islamic policy.

Another extensive state was the Borno empire. But at the time of the British invasion it was undergoing a dynastic change following the advent of Rabih from the eastern Sudan in 1893.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the British arrested the emergence of a new government under a new dynasty. But before 1893, the Shehus, since the beginning of the 19th century, had been at the helm of affairs. The Shehus were surrounded by an élite of advisors headed by the *Wazir*. There was also a council, the *Nokena*, consisting of members of the Shehu's family, feudatories both old (i.e., Saifawa period) and new, and the *Kokenawa*, supporters of the Shehu dynasty. The last group was made up of the *Kambe* (free citizens) and the *Macella* (slave officer class) who functioned as garrison commanders in local government. The leading supporters of the dynasty, the *Kokenawa*, functioned as civil servants drawing salaries from governorship and fiefs and paying tribute to the Shehus.<sup>5</sup>

Other important, fairly centralized polities in the Northern Nigeria area lay outside Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate. These were the Hausa states of Kebbi, Yawuri and Abuja administered on the pattern of the pre-jihad Hausa governments.<sup>6</sup> The polities were headed by the *Sarakuna* (kings) surrounded by a class *Masu-sarauta* (officials). There were also a number of kingdoms and chieftaincies along the Niger-Benue valleys and in the Nigerian central highlands. The Jukun kingdom of Wukari headed by the *Aku* covered the greater part of the middle Benue region and it had a number of dependent chieftaincies.<sup>7</sup> Also in the same region there were the chieftaincies of Donga, Takum and Suntai. In the Niger-Benue confluence area, the Igala kingdom was dominant, but its authority never extended over the Idoma and the Igbirra. In the region to the west and south of Borno there were the Bolewa chieftaincies in the region of the lower Gongola valley. In most of the non-Hausa, non-Muslim chieftaincies, the chiefs were usually religious dignitaries and the ethnic groups that exercised power and influence had control of important religious cults. For example, the most important group on the plateau in the 19th century, the Montol, derived their influence from their control of Mata Fada—an important religious centre of the Ankwe and other ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup> Not all the ethnic groups outside Borno and the

3. Such as Kano, Katsina, Daura, Kazaure, Katagum, Hadejia, Jama'are, Misau, Bauchi, Gombe, Muri, Zari, Fombina, Nupe, Ilorin, Kontogora, Lapai and Agaie. There were also a number of Emirates under Gwandu in the present Niger Republic. See S.A. Balogun, "Gwandu Emirates", Ph.D. dissertation, Ibadan, 1970.

4. See R.A. Adeleye, "Rabih b. Fadlallah, 1879-1893: Exploits and Impact on Political Relations in the Central Sudan", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1970, pp. 223-42.

5. For a consideration of the Borno government under the Shehus, see L. Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa*, London, 1973.

6. Works on the old political system of the Hausa include M. Adamu, "A Hausa Government in Decline: Yawuri in the 19th Century" M.A. thesis, A.B.U., 1968, M.B. Alkali, "A Hausa Community in Crisis: Kebbi in the 19th Century", M.A. thesis, A.B.U., 1969.

7. See chapter ....

8. J.M. Fremantle, ed., *The Gazetteer of Muri Province*, Lagos, 1922.

Caliphate lived in states or chieftaincies. The Tiv for example lived as independent communities under the authority of elders.

### **The British Conquest and Establishment of Colonial Rule**

British contact with the peoples of the Northern Nigerian area dates back to the early explorations across the Sahara Desert. But it was not until the mid-19th century that the British became definitely interested in developing close commercial links with the Niger-Benue territory where their traders had been operating. During the last quarter of that century, a British trading concern, the National Africa Company, became dominant in the Niger-Benue trade. Then, on the basis of treaties allegedly concluded with some emirs, chiefs and community leaders, the company obtained a charter to administer the territories it claimed. Subsequently, the Royal Niger Company (RNC) as it became in 1886 attempted to consolidate its position through military activity in order to keep away other European rivals and also to control the numerous communities of the region. This was the beginning of the end of independence for the various states and communities in the northern states.

In 1885, Bula, the chief of Ibi, was compelled by the National Africa Company to sign a treaty surrendering his lands.<sup>9</sup> Ibi then became the headquarters of the company's Benue territory. In the same year, the Chamba chieftaincy of Donga was brought under the control of the company. But the other chieftaincy, Suntai, resisted. In 1889 it was besieged for three months but to no avail as chief Porba refused to capitulate. Force having failed, the RNC resorted to diplomacy; it presented Porba a sword of honour for the able way Suntai was defended. Consequently, it is claimed, Porba accepted British 'friendship' and Suntai became part of the company's territory. The RNC was equally active in the region north of the Benue, especially against Wase, a vassal state of the Emir of Bauchi. By 1898 Wase was conquered and occupied. But the activities of the company in other areas were not attended with the same successes. It was capable of dealing militarily against small states and chieftaincies, but was ill-equipped to confront the large emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. In 1897, for example, Bida and Ilorin were conquered, but the RNC failed to bring them under its effective control.<sup>10</sup> The realization that the chartered company had failed to keep away other European rivals from the Niger-Benue territory led to the revocation of its charter by the British government in 1900. Then, a 'protectorate' was declared over the territory claimed by the company and Captain Lugard was appointed its High Commissioner.

The newly declared protectorate existed only on paper. Captain Lugard had to embark on military campaigns as from 1900 to bring the vast area under British control. At the beginning of 1901, the control of the British over Bida and Ilorin, which were conquered in 1897, was restored. Then, in September, Yola was conquered and constituted part of the upper Benue Province. In 1902 while Konta-

9. *ibid.*

10. The two major expeditions by the British Royal Niger Company against the emirates of Nupe and Ilorin in 1897 did not result in greater RNC or British control and the two emirates had to be re-occupied in 1901. See J.E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London, 1960, pp. 250-55.



gora fell to the British, Zaria surrendered and Bauchi was occupied. Further north, Abubakar Garbai accepted the British terms rather than the French's and was consequently recognized the Shehu of British Borno.<sup>11</sup> Finally, in 1903 Kano was conquered and Katsina submitted peacefully and so the way was cleared for the final confrontation with the Caliph at Sokoto. Before the end of that year, the British forces under General Kemball entered Sokoto and the Caliph Attahiru fled eastwards.<sup>12</sup> By 1903, the major polities in the northern part of the Nigerian area were brought under the British. But in the region outside the Caliphate and Borno fighting went on up to the period of the First World War.

With the overthrow of the major polities, we can say that the British Northern Provinces had come into being and that colonial administration had started. In considering the evolution of that administration, it is important to state the policies by which the British claimed to have been guided. The major one was the declaration that their aim was not to disrupt the pre-existing system of government, but to make it more humane and democratic.<sup>13</sup> Thus, as they claimed, their policy was to support the traditional rulers, their councils and their courts, their customs and traditions in so far as these were not repugnant to the British ideals of humanity and justice.<sup>14</sup> Undoubtedly, these are fundamental policies which need careful analysis against the background of subsequent developments. How far, for example, can it be said that traditional institutions of government were tolerated by the British? Also, were the traditional rulers really free under alien overlordship to govern their communities according to their customs and traditions as of old? These are important questions whose answers may throw a great deal of light on our understanding of the so-called Indirect Rule in the Northern Provinces.

One of the problems which the British faced in trying to establish a colonial administration was that of insufficient men and materials with which to govern a vast territory. Their initial personnel comprised the officer corps of the invading army and the skeletal staff inherited from the Royal Niger Company. Thus, it was impossible for the British to establish an effective 'direct' government with the men and resources at their disposal. No doubt, it was this problem that forced the British to accept the pre-existing traditional forms of government. Before the conquest, the British had, in search of some justification, condemned the emirate type of government as corrupt, oppressive and grossly inefficient.<sup>15</sup> However, after the British had defeated and subjugated the emirs, they were faced with the problems of governing and so their views on the emirs suddenly changed. The once 'corrupt and oppressive' Fulbe were hailed as born rulers whom the British had to maintain at all cost; their long

11. See A. Burns, *History of Nigeria*, London, 1955, p. 180. Garbai had already paid ₦45,938 out of the ₦50,000 demanded by the French.

12. R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906*, London, 1971, p. 274.

13. See M. Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority, 1899-1945*, London, 1960.

14. *ibid.*

15. Walter Miller for example described the Fulbe emirs as "robbers and oppressors" who had established through jihad a "most iniquitous government . . . hopelessly perjured and putridly rotten". See E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria: 1842-1914*, London, 1966, p. 136.

established system of government was fit to be utilized by the British.<sup>16</sup> So, the emirate system of the Sokoto Caliphate became, for the British, a good model for local government in the Northern Provinces. Consequently, the system was patronized and eventually extended even over non-Muslim groups. In so doing, the British believed that they had not altered the system. But, in actual fact, what eventually emerged as emirates under them was, as we shall see, a distortion of the old emirate type of government.

### The Emirates and Borno under the British

Whenever the period of British colonial rule in the former Northern Provinces comes up for discussion, 'Indirect Rule' is the main theme. Also known as the 'Lugardian system', it has been defined as an administrative system not "having two sets of rulers—the British and the natives working either separately or in co-operation, but a single government in which the native chiefs have clearly defined duties and an acknowledged status equally with the British official".<sup>17</sup> Certainly, the 'acknowledged status' of the 'native' chief was far below that of the British official. In most studies of 'Indirect Rule' in the Northern Provinces, the impression is usually given that even after the British conquest there were no drastic changes in the emirate set up; that emirs and chiefs continued to wield power and influence as before. Others even have it that the emirs under the British had more powers than their 19th century predecessors.<sup>18</sup> But, in actual fact, there were considerable changes in the emirates, changes that eventually transformed the emirs into mere agents of the British.

The Northern Provinces came into existence as a result of conquest, and the mere fact of defeat had greatly weakened the forces of law and order. It had also seriously affected the powers of the emirs. The conquest, certainly, brought into disrepute the whole business of chieftaincy, especially during the period before the First World War. During the process of occupation, most of the emirs were deposed or forced to abandon their capitals. By 1906, not less than ten emirs were deposed and replaced by men 'chosen and installed' by the British High Commissioner.<sup>19</sup> The many changes of emirs within so short a time of colonial rule, undoubtedly, brought about a great upheaval in traditional government. The argument that the emirs were overthrown

16. Northern Nigerian: Annual Reports, 1902, p. 26.

17. F.D. Lugard, *Instructions to Political and other Officers on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative*, 1906 (henceforth *Political Memoranda*, p. 191.

18. J.F.J. Fitzpatrick, "Nigeria's Curse—The Native Administration", *National Review*, No. 502, December, 1924, p. 616.

19. In 1901, the Emir Abubakar of Bida was deposed; the Emir Ibrahim Nagwamatse of Kontagora; in Yola the Emir Zubairu fled and died in 1902. In that year, the Emir Kwassau of Zaria was deposed; so was the Emir of Bauchi Muhammadu. In 1902, the Emir Hassan of Muri died before an order for his deposition arrived. Also, Kano was occupied and the Emir Aliyu was replaced by Abbas; the Caliph Attahiru fled and was replaced almost immediately. In 1904, the Emir Abubakar of Katsina was deposed. Finally, in 1906 the Emir of Gwandu Muhammadu was deposed and his namesake of Hadejia killed. After all, the British were so much concerned with legitimacy—it was a false issue. See R. Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, London, 1968, p. 35.

because they had refused British protection is untenable. It has been shown that Sokoto and Kano wanted to avoid hostilities but that Lugard made no real effort to establish peaceable and friendly contact with them.<sup>20</sup> He was more bent on conquest to demonstrate British power and also because he believed that military defeat would transfer the allegiance of the people from the emirs to the British. After the campaigns, Lugard pointed out that the Fulbe emirs had lost by *defeat* the powers they had won by conquest.<sup>21</sup> Needless to say, the British had won by force of arms what the emirs had been enjoying. The emirs, being military men themselves, knew the consequences of military defeat. It meant not only the loss of sovereignty but also a big change in their status. From autonomous rulers under the Caliph, they thenceforth became vassals of the victor power. Thus, by the end of the British conquest, the institutions of the emirate governments were weakened and discredited, and the emirs appointed by the British ceased to be true leaders of the people. The spell of their powers was broken and they had to depend on their new masters.

The emirs under the British were in many ways different from their 19th century predecessors. Firstly, they had little power. All the new emirs installed by the British had to swear the oath of allegiance in the name of Allah and the Prophet to "well and truly serve his Majesty and his representative the High Commissioner";<sup>22</sup> to cherish no treachery and disloyalty in their hearts, to obey the laws of the protectorate (derived not from the shari'a) and the lawful commands of the High Commissioner and his Residents. The protectorate was divided into provinces each under a British Resident responsible to the High Commissioner. The provinces were in turn divided into divisions each under a British District Officer responsible to the Resident. Most of the emirates became divisions on their own. The District Officer's main roles in their divisions were to 'educate and discipline'; they also supplied the initiative and the continuing pressure over local government matters.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the District Officers pushed everyone, from the emir down to the *jekada* (messengers); and like a master over his houseboy, they watched and directed the administration of the emirates. The Residents, being provincial 'rulers' were in the words of Lugard, "to advise and help, but able with full statutory power to *control* and *command*".<sup>24</sup> It is clear therefore that the Residents and the District Officers were superiors of the emirs and chiefs, and were to act as watchdogs, directing reforms and reporting developments in their respective areas to the High Commissioner. The power of the Residents in each province was supported by military presence in the capitals. On the other hand, our peoples and their rulers were prohibited from bearing arms. Thus, in the Northern Provinces, the small British elite, alien as it was, had a monopoly of power and responsibility. That the British political officers had become very powerful in the emirates need not be doubted. Nicknames such as *Zaki* (lion), *Giwa* (elephant) *Babban Dodo* (the big monster) applied to some Residents in some provinces are suggestive of the enormous power enjoyed by them. The emirs, chiefs, as well as their

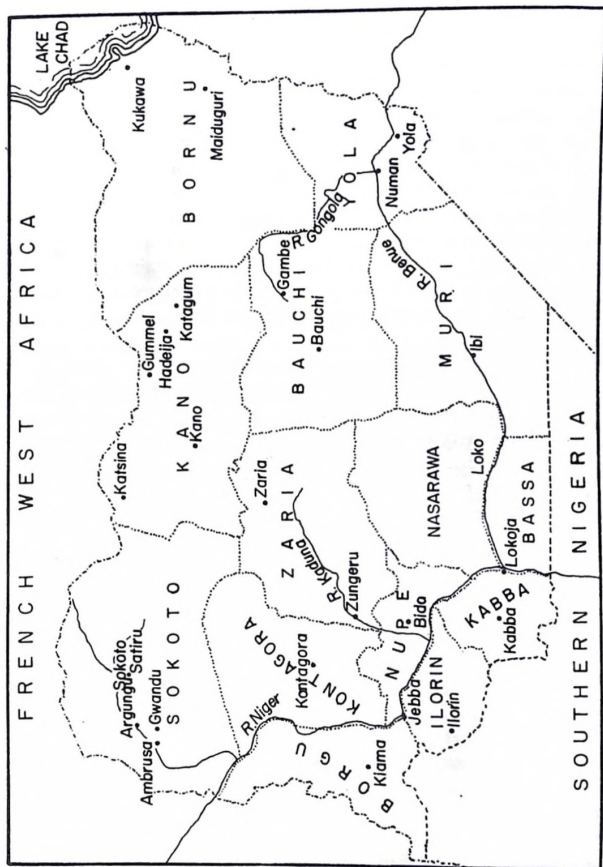
20. See D.M. Muffet, *Concerning Brave Captains*, London, 1964.

21. Lugard in a speech after the occupation of Sokoto. See M. Perham, op. cit., pp. 128-9.

22. Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, pp. 191-92.

23. This is evident from the work of Temple, *Native Races and Their Rulers*.

24. Perham op. cit., p. 148.



Northern Nigeria 1906. Based on map in *Annual Reports, Northern Nigeria* 1906-7

local officials, became men who had no right to their positions unless they rendered proper services to the colonial administration. In 1903, the Caliph Attahiru Ahmadu was killed at Burmi. This brought not only the formal end of the Caliphate, but opened the way for the erosion of the Caliph's powers. Ultimately, the quality of the institutions of the Caliphate and the emirate governments was greatly undermined. The newly installed Attahiru II was not designated Caliph, but was styled 'Sultan' by the British. He ceased to have anything to do with the emirates and their emirs. In the 19th century, the Caliph was the political head of the Caliphate, the religious leader of the community, the supreme judge of the shari'a whose duties included the appointment and deposition of emirs and the enforcement of Islamic law. After 1903, these were gone for ever and the Muslim community was leaderless. The destruction of the Caliph's power over the emirates was not a result of ignorance on the part of the British who, through their association with the Ottoman Caliphate, knew pretty well what that system was about. Rather, it was a deliberate policy. They were aware that so long as the Caliph remained what he had been in the 19th century, the loyalty of the individual emirs to the British High Commissioner would be limited by their loyalty to their religious leader. So the new ruler at Sokoto was designated Sultan and made a first-class chief; also, his authority was confined to the districts of the Caliphate metropolis.

The limitation of the Caliph's power had a real disintegrating effect. Communication between Sokoto and the emirates ceased in favour of the British. The emirs, isolated from the Caliph and from one another, were treated by the British as if each was an independent sovereign. This weakened their will to resist the changes which the British eventually introduced. It was not until the 1930s that this isolation came to an end and the emirs were given the chance to discuss common problems through periodic meetings—the annual chiefs' conferences.<sup>25</sup> As a result of the elimination of the Caliph's power, the British High Commissioner became the new 'Caliph' exercising the functions hitherto performed by the Sokoto Caliph. These included the appointment and deposition of emirs. Also, the British Residents became the new 'emirs' through whom the High Commissioner came to exercise effective control over the traditional rulers, making them bow to the interest of the British. The central leadership of the Caliphate being destroyed, the British administration in the protectorate was in a much stronger position to effect the changes necessary to bring about greater colonial control.

Among the new policies proclaimed by the British, those on slavery, justice and taxation had a rather negative impact on the powers of the emirs. Following the declaration of the protectorate, the British abolished the legal status of slavery, prohibited slave dealings and declared that all children born after the first of April 1901 were to be free.<sup>26</sup> The proclamation was made partly with the hope of paralysing the emirate governments which, for a number of reasons, depended on slaves. They were needed for communication, there being no convenient form of long-distance transportation of goods. They were also needed by the emirs and their officials to cultivate the farms. Much as slavery was repugnant to the British, it was not as bad in

25. This was the Northern Provinces Residents' Conference and the Conference of Chiefs which started in 1932. See SNP 1721, Acc. 3067, National Archives, Kaduna.

26. See Perham, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.



the Caliphate as was often painted. In all emirates slaves had attained power, wealth and prestige. In Katsina, for example, a powerful slave group, the *Batakulki*, under the Emir Abubakar opposed emancipation because it only amounted to loss of their privileges and influence.<sup>27</sup> In all the other emirates, slaves—especially the domestic ones—did not welcome emancipation because most of them enjoyed living under powerful and influential masters. The *gandu* (farm) slaves may have welcomed freedom but it meant that they would have to look after themselves in the future. Hitherto, they had lived on the lands of their masters farming for them as well as for themselves. After emancipation, they had to vacate the master's lands and join the rest of the peasant farmers whom the British had come to exploit. The whole emancipation question was a big farce; slavery was declared abolished but only to be replaced by new forms of enslavement—forced labour in the tin mines, on roads and railway constructions.

In the judicial field, the British did not abolish the *Qadis* courts which were operating the *Maliki* law, but they established the English type of courts functioning on three tiers. Each province had a court having jurisdiction over employees of the colonial government as well as over the non-indigenes.<sup>28</sup> There was also a Supreme Court in the protectorate capital. The Residents were the provincial law officers for their territories. Although in the *Qadis* courts the Residents and the District Officers played no part, they had access to the records of proceedings and were directed to see that certain canonical punishments—such as amputation of limbs for theft, stoning to death of fornicators—were not implemented. These were serious departures from the sharia', which most *Qadis* found difficult to abide by, hence, some used to pass double judgements, one in court abiding by the dictate of the *Nasara* (Europeans) and the other at home based on the shari'a.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, during the period of British colonial rule the jurisdiction of political officers extended over executive actions as well as over the courts of justice. Apart from being the presiding officer of the provincial court, the Resident and his District Officers used to interfere with the working of the *Qadis* courts, reducing sentences, or transferring cases to their own courts as they deemed right.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, apart from establishing a rival judicial system based on alien laws, and interfering in the *Qadis* courts, the British also ended the system of appeals to the Caliph at Sokoto. Appeals could only be made to the Residents and ultimately to the British High Commissioner.

As regards taxation, Lugard had made it clear that British sovereignty in the protectorate involved not only the right to appoint emirs and all officers of state, but also ultimate right to all lands, the right of legislation and of taxation.<sup>31</sup> Before the

27. Grateful to Yusuf Bala Usman whose work on the history of Katsina emirate in the 19th century for the Ph.D. in ABU 1974 is currently being processed for publication.

28. Perham, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-63.

29. The judgement at home by the *Qadis* was because they regarded the non-enforcement of the shari'a as unislamic and also to satisfy their conscience that they had not side-tracked the sharia. After all, the infliction of the punishment was not their business.

30. Temple, *op. cit.*, p. ....

31. Annual Reports, N. Nigeria, 1902, p. 25. There were different taxes in the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. In Zaria for example, there were about fifteen. See E.J. Arnett, *Gazetteer of Zaria Province*, London, 1920, p. 16.

conquest, there were a variety of taxes in the emirates and Borno. These included *kharaj* (land tax) by Muslims, and *jizya* (poll tax) paid by non-Muslim communities under *aman* (trust). There were also tributes paid to the emirs and the Shehu of Borno by their vassal, and occupational taxes and tolls on trade. Some emirs used the occupational taxes and tolls on trade to promote or discourage certain occupations or trade on certain commodities and not, as often thought, to exploit the peasants and trading groups. In the emirate of Katsina, for example, the emirs, in order to encourage Katsina merchants, used to levy high taxes on alien traders. There were also some arrangements with some Tuareg groups for the supply of certain essential commodities—including probably potash.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the emirs were in charge of the economy of their emirates. They levied higher taxes when certain commodities were not required (or to adjust the imbalance of trade) or if the merchants were unwelcome. The collection of the various taxes was vested in an important political group, comprising emir's slaves and members of the leading families. In some of the trades the latter supervised the various occupations and at times carried out certain religious rituals calculated to benefit trade, etc. The tax collectors performed their job either personally or through agents (*wakilai*). They were not fiefholders or under them, but a distinct group within the emirate government.

The payment of *kharaj*, *jizya* and tribute, certainly, constituted acceptance of political dependence. The defeat of the emirs by the British meant that they were no longer political masters and so they had no legal rights to the customary taxes and tribute. However, during the early years of colonial rule, the emirs and the Shehu of Borno were allowed to collect and retain all the customary taxes and tribute. This was to compensate the emirs for their other losses resulting from the abolition of slavery. But this only lasted for a few years. The British colonial administration was becoming increasingly in need of revenue to pay the salaries of British officers, African soldiers and police and to undertake public works such as the construction of offices and residences for the officials at the headquarters and in the provinces. The subsidies from the British government and subventions from the Southern Protectorate were far too short of the needs and so the Northern Protectorate government had to seek ways and means of raising revenue internally. Unlike in the Southern Protectorate where revenue was realized from customs duties mainly on liquor, at the ports, the North had no seaboard and the border of the protectorate was so extensive that it was impossible to establish effective customs posts. Moreover, with the prohibition of liquor import into the emirates, even if it were possible to collect custom duties effectively, the revenue would still have been inadequate for the government. So, there was no alternative other than to take over the right of taxation from the emirs and to introduce changes for more efficient collection of taxes.

In 1904, the Land Ordinance came into being. The different taxes in the emirates and Borno were abolished and tax was levied on land, each district in the emirates being assigned the amount to pay.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the *kudin-kasa* came into existence; also, tax was levied on cattle—the *jangali*. The collection of these new taxes was vested in

32. Grateful to Yusuf Bala Usman.

33. See Perham, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-66.

district and village heads. The revenue realized was shared equally between the emirs and the protectorate government. But by 1911, after a new proclamation had created Native Authorities with native treasuries, the taxes collected had to be paid into the treasuries to be budgeted.<sup>34</sup> The emirs and their officials became employees of the Native Authorities and were all placed on fixed salaries. The changes in taxation enforced by the British transformed the functions of the emirs. The abolishing of the occupational taxes and tolls on trade meant that the emirs had lost control over the economy of the emirates—the right to promote or discourage certain trades and the right to regulate the inflow and outflow of special commodities. Also, by standardizing taxes into kudin-kasa and jangali, and passing the collections into the hands of district and village heads, an important political class—the previous group of collectors—was rendered redundant. Thus, the effect of the various changes was less power for the emirs. Hitherto, they were independent heads of local administration concerned with the promotion and enforcement of Islamic policy. But by 1911 they had become mere agents of the British with different duties and obligations.

### The Middle Belt area under the British

The term 'Middle Belt' is used here to refer to the vast region outside the two major 19th century polities, the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno, of the Northern Provinces. The region comprised states, chieftaincies and small communities in varying scales of political organization. It was also a region where the majority of the inhabitants were non-Muslims. Thus, it lacked political, religious or ethnic unity. It is no wonder therefore that the British in a bid to bring the region under control and effective occupation were faced with peculiar problems. In the emirates, for example, the British, after defeating the emirs, took over the administrative system as a going concern which, eventually, they modified to suit their purpose. But in the Middle Belt region, the traditional system of government varied from one area to another. There was also the problem of ethnic diversity. Thus it was impossible to recognize the numerous petty socio-political units as they had existed for the purpose of provincial and divisional administrations. In trying to establish some sort of administration over the diverse heterogeneous peoples, the British felt that the 'emirate type' organization was the best answer. Consequently, the larger states in the region were constituted into emirates. Thus, the Hausa states of Yawuri, Kebbi and Abuja became emirates and their rulers styled emirs. The same was applied to the Borgu states of Bussa and Kiamia; and to the Pabir kingdom of Viyu, the states of Fika and Bedde to the west of Borno. Most of the states converted to emirates were fairly centralized before the British advent, but there were some where the degree of centralization was very low. In Viyu, for example, the *kuthli's* (chief) authority had never been strong over the Bura. But the British eventually succeeded through force of arms and diplomacy,<sup>35</sup> in placing not only the Bura but also other chieftaincies under the control of the 'Emir' of Biu.<sup>35</sup>

There were also within the Middle Belt region a number of states which were dependencies of some emirates. Zaria for example was in control of Keffi. Doma,

34. *ibid.*, p. 472. It was first introduced by Palmer in Katsina. See Mary Bull, 'Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria, 1906-1911', *Essays in Imperial Government*, Oxford, 1963, p. 67.

35. J.C. Davies, 'The Biu Book' (mimeo, NORLA, Zaria, 1956), pp. 43-74.

Jama'a and Nasarawa; Bauchi had control over Wase. But following the British changes, these states were separated from the major emirates; they too were recognized as emirates under the British. The move was in accordance with the need to control and limit the powers of the old emirs. The 19th century emirates bordering the Middle Belt region comprised three types of territory, non-Muslim territory under *aman* and that which was only subject to periodic raids from the emirates. Thus, one of the issues which the British had to resolve was how far the rule of the emirs should be recognized over the non-Muslim territories.<sup>36</sup> But one thing was quite clear—much as the British were keen in maintaining the emirate system—they were not interested in the Muslim emirs having unlimited power over extensive territories. So there was no question of recognizing the emirs' claims of control over the various non-Muslim groups bordering their territories. This explains the excision of the vassal states and the separation of some non-Muslim groups from the control of the emirs.

In pursuance of the policy of curtailing the emirate's control over non-Muslims in the Middle Belt region, the British proceeded to undermine the powers of the emirs. This came about through building up the position and authority of petty chiefs who had been very good friends of the British before the establishment of the protectorate. In the middle Benue region for example, the emirate of Muri had control over some Jukun and Chamba groups of the Taraba valley. But some of the chiefs in the area, notably those of Ibi, Suntai and Donga, had been most friendly to the Royal Niger Company and their territories fell within the sphere of the company's 'administration'. Following the British assumption of the company's administration, the greater part of the middle Benue area formed part of the Muri Province created in 1901. Consequently, the former allies of the company benefitted. Ibi for example became the capital of the Muri Province, and was also transformed into a division comprising different ethnic groups hitherto independent of the chief of Ibi. From about 1902, Ibi Division comprised forty districts, but in 1909, two administrative districts were created. One comprising fifteen districts was based at Gerkawa and the rest centred on Ibi. The former subsequently became Shendam Division. The districts in the Ibi Division were further reorganized into seven, four to the north of the Benue and three to the south. The British thus introduced very far-reaching changes all in the direction of greater centralization. It is important therefore to consider the basis for the changes. Did they reflect pre-existing community structures or pre-existing political conditions? To answer these questions, we need to consider the political situation of the middle Benue area before the British advent.

The important ethnic groups in the region were the Jukun along the Benue and the Taraba valley; the Chamba and the Tikar south of the Benue to the west of the Mambila Plateau. To the north of the Benue were the Ankwe and the Montol in the districts to the east of the Jos Plateau. However, the Jukun were politically dominant and their Aku had been very powerful before the 19th century.<sup>37</sup> But in that century, the different Jukun groups—including those of Wukari—acknowledged the overlordship of either Muri or Bauchi. It is said that the Aku of Wukari himself used to send tribute to both the Emir of Muri and Bauchi, probably to maintain a situation of

36. Lugard, *Memoranda*, p. 263.

37. See chapter 9.



'live and let live'.<sup>38</sup> But the emirs had nothing to do with the appointment or deposition of the Wukari Akus—this was a measure of the independence of the Wukari Jukun. Thus, despite the emergence of Muslim emirates the Aku of Wukari maintained his position and authority over the generality of the Jukun. His leadership was acknowledged even by those Jukun who had been conquered and subjected by the Muslim emirs. The Jukun chiefs of Kona, Bantajo and of the Jibu had never faltered in their allegiance to the Aku of Wukari, their spiritual overlord, and all used to attend the important religious festivals held annually in Wukari. With the advent of British colonial rule, the vassalage of the Jukun chieftaincies, except Kona, to the emirate was put to an end. The various chiefs were recognized as autonomous, subject only to the British Resident at Ibi, thereby ending their connection with the Aku of Wukari. One would have expected, in view of the avowed British policy of governing people through their traditional institutions or through pre-conquest political systems, either that the Jukun would be regrouped together under the paramountcy of the Aku as a nucleus of a centralized authority on the emirate pattern, or that the emirate system would be allowed to remain as it had existed. But neither the former nor the latter was implemented by the British. The power of the Aku was consciously not rebuilt for fear of creating a very strong traditional central authority which might be difficult to manage. By not re-unifying the Jukun, the British watered down the prestige of the Aku despite the fact that there had existed at their disposal a highly sophisticated traditional political system for the proper implementation of 'Indirect Rule'. Thus, while the emirate of Muri was excised to limit the power of the emir and effect more British control, the old Jukun power was not revived for the same reasons. The British were not just out to establish any sort of administration over the 'natives', they were more concerned with establishing 'loyal' administrations. This explains the building up of the position and authority of their allies. The Chamba of Donga and Suntai had been under British 'protection' long before the others in the middle Benue area. Ibi on its part was a sort of colony because the chief had long surrendered his lands to the British. All the three chieftaincies were removed from the emirate of Muri; Donga and Suntai were at first constituted into independent districts and then in 1913 were merged to form a single district under the *Gara* (chief) Donga.

In the region north of the Benue, there were similar upheavals in the traditional political set-up resulting in the destruction of the emirate system and the building up of new British supported centralized authorities. The tradition of the major ethnic group, the Ankwe and related clans, indicates that they were subject to the Jukun in the distant past. But in the 19th century, some lived as independent groups while others formed part of the emirate of Bauchi whose Madaki had founded the vassal state of Wase in c. 1820. The subsequent activities of Bauchi from its Wase outpost extended down to the Benue valley. In the 1890s Wase came into conflict with the British Royal Niger Company which claimed to be protecting the middle Benue inhabitants from Muslim depredations. Consequently, Wase was conquered and occupied in 1898. This started the dismemberment of the emirate of Bauchi. In 1902 Bauchi itself was occupied and the British separated Wase from the emir's control and made it part of Ibi Division. Also, in 1909, on the occasion of the installation of

38. Fremantle, *op. cit.*, p. 38.



Abdullahi as the Chief of Wase, the Ankwe were declared an independent group outside his jurisdiction. Thus, the process of reconsolidating the Ankwe was begun. In that year, Ankwe and Kwolla districts were created. But in 1913 the latter was abolished and its inhabitants, Doka, Bwol, Miriam, Gorom, Kwolla and Yergam, were incorporated into the Ankwe district centred on Shendam.

Like in the area south of the Benue, here too, the British were concerned with establishing their control through loyal chiefs. The Ankwe chief has been described as most "capable and energetic" and so the promotion of his authority was in the interest of the British. It is true that the groups subordinated to him were Ankwe clans, but in the past no clan among them was subordinate to the other as they had no paramount chief. It is equally true that the British had freed the various clans from the control of the Emir of Bauchi, but the establishment of an independent Ankwe district amounted to nothing for most clans other than a change of masters, from a distant and nominal one—the Emir of Bauchi—to a closer and more effective one—the Chief of Shendam.<sup>39</sup> Apart from the Ankwe, other groups on the central plateau were also reorganized and reconstituted into larger political units for the purpose of colonial administration. In 1918 for example, the Yergam (Torok) whose centre, Langtang, was occupied in 1902, were reorganized into a district. Other sub-groups, the Burat and Gani, which in the past used to challenge Langtang's seniority, were also incorporated into the new district. By 1919, the Gerkawa were prevailed upon to accept Langtang as their centre. Thus, the whole Yergam came under the authority of the *Long-Kemai* (the Langtang ruler).

By about 1920, the British had succeeded in limiting the territorial jurisdiction of the emirs whose territories bordered the middle Benue area. The Emir of Muri lost control over the Jukun living south of the Taraba and the Mumuye north of the Mumuye massif. The latter formed part of the Yola Province created after 1902. Bauchi, on the other hand, lost control over Wase and the large number of ethnic groups under its suzerainty. In such areas new 'traditional' authorities emerged with chiefs supported by the British, exercising control over groups that were hitherto either independent or only marginally under the emirates. In other areas, however, it was not easy to find chiefs whose positions could be established. At first therefore, the British used what they termed 'political agents'—usually men closely associated with the British officers, such as messengers, cooks or even stewards. The agents assisted the District Officers in judging cases and in tax assessment and collection. Eventually, some of them grew to be very powerful in certain areas. In Makurdi, for example, Audu dan Ahoada, a Yoruba groom of Hewby ended by becoming the Sarkin Makurdi.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, among the Igbirra of Okene the British built up the position of Ibrahim who eventually became the Atta with his authority extended to Lokoja.<sup>41</sup> Among the Idoma, on the other hand, the various clans were first united into districts

39. *ibid.* p. 45: The chief was Donkwop (1906-1915). It is said that he took an active interest in the war 1914-18) and that before his death in 1915, he had sent a present of cattle to the troops employed on the Muri-Cameroon boundary.

40. Heussler, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

41. Y.A. Ibrahim, "The Search for Leadership in a Nigerian Society: Igbirra Tao", M.A. Thesis, A.B.U. 1968, pp. 119-157.

with the headship rotating among the clan leaders. Subsequently, the office of *Ochi'Doma* developed with authority over all the Idoma.<sup>42</sup>

The two methods commonly employed by the British, appointing political agents and building up the position of petty chief or influential men, were simply designed for administrative convenience. Such 'rulers' had no traditional sanctions for their positions and without British support they would not have exercised any authority. Thus, their continued stay in office depended upon the degree of their loyalty to the colonial power.<sup>43</sup> In some areas, the British failed either to build a centralized authority immediately or to make use of political agents. Tivland was one of such areas. The Tiv social organization was based on extended kindreds headed by elders. Their complex socio-political organization remained unknown to the British for a very long time and so it was a big problem to devise a suitable method of governing them. However, in 1937 a 'Native Authority' based on the council of elders was established. By 1945 the elders contrasting their positions unfavourably with the powerful chiefs and emirs elsewhere, requested the appointment of a paramount chief. It was then that an ex-serviceman, Makari Zakpe, was appointed the *Tor Tiv*.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, as regards both the Middle Belt region and the Caliphate-Borno, the final result of British policies was the limitation of the territorial control of the hitherto powerful emirs and other pre-existing highly influential non-Muslim chiefs. At the same time, newly centralized authorities emerged out of nothing and through them the position of colonial agents was deliberately built up. Some of the pre-British polities in fact lost territories as a result of various European agreements designed to resolve their colonial claims.<sup>46</sup> These were confirmed after the British occupation. Borno for example lost its dependencies such as Damagaram and Kanem, and even parts of *Bilad Kukawa*. The Caliphate, on the other hand, lost territories in the west and north to the French, and in the east to the Germans. As a result of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1894, the emirate of Fombina lost seven-eighths of its territory to the Germans. The remaining one-eighth, which was conquered by the British, was poor and scanty in population.<sup>47</sup> The partition of the emirate destroyed the position of the emir and was the basis of Yola's hostility to the British which resulted in the deposition of Bobbo Ahmadu in 1909 and the abdication of his successor in the following year.<sup>48</sup> Other emirates lost territories through British administrative reforms. In Zaria, for example, apart from ending the emir's hegemony over the southern vassal states, Keffi, Doma, Jama'a and Nasarawa, the non-Muslim region to the south of the metropolis was also excised to form 'independent' districts. Similarly,

42. Appointed in 1947 and installed in 1949; see Stanhope White, *Dan Bana*, London, 1966, p. 42.

43. Lugard *hta* made it abundantly clear that an emir or chief "has no right to his place and power, unless he renders his proper services to the State" British administration. See Perham, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

44. D.C. Doward, "The Development of the British Colonial Administration Among the Tivs, 1900-49", *African Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 273, October, 1969, pp. 316-33.

45. *ibid.*, p. 331. He was appointed in 1946.

46. See Herstlet, *Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols.

47. *ibid.*

48. S. Abubakar, Fombina, pp. 462-3.

in 1908 Paiko was transferred from Zaria to Nupe Province. In the latter, the Kabba area was declared independent of the emir as early as 1896 and this was confirmed after the second occupation of Bida in 1901.<sup>49</sup> The area, including Lokoja, was made part of Ilorin Province in 1913.<sup>50</sup> Also, the Kyede were removed out of Bida emirate to form an emirate under the British who had appointed Idrisu Gana, a member of the Nupe dynasty overthrown during the jihad as the Etsu. Their separation was motivated by the desire to reward them for their collaboration with the British Royal Niger Company during its invasion of Nupe in 1897.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the emirate of Pategi came into being. In 1923 Kabba was separated from Ilorin to become a province on its own and in 1936 Ilorin was further reduced when the Ekiti of Awtun were allowed to rejoin their kin in Ondo Province outside the Northern Provinces.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, while a number of non-Muslim groups became autonomous through administrative changes, and others were reconstituted into chieftaincies, some other groups remained not only divided but were left under the control of Muslim emirs. The Margi belonged to the last category. In 1904, for example, Borno Province comprised the Pabir, the Bolewa, the Ngizim and the Margi.<sup>53</sup> In 1906, however, the province was divided into west and east sub-provinces, the latter under Maiduguri and the former under Dumjeri. Then, it was redivided into six divisions, the Margi constituting one, called Ajimar. But in 1909 the division was abolished and the Margi divided between Borno under the Shehu and Biu under the Pabir, forming the Margi and Askira districts respectively. Some remained outside Borno Province under the control of the emir at Yola. Since then the Margi remained distributed among their neighbouring large emirates. There was never any attempt to build up a centralized chieftaincy as was done elsewhere by the British. Similarly, on the Biu Plateau the dominant group was the Bura while the Pabir were a minority and there were a number of independent chieftaincies. But following the advent of the British, the majority were placed under the control of the minority. The *Kuthli-Viyu*, Garga Kwomting, one of the chiefs on the plateau, endeared himself to the British and was consequently recognized as paramount. The Bura majority remained part in Biu and part under the Emir of Yola.

From what happened in the Northern Provinces, it would be quite wrong to conclude that the British respected the pre-existing socio-political institutions of the people. Neither the emirates nor the autochthonous states were allowed to function as before. The British were interested in maintaining the emirates but not in the manner of their previous existence, with the emirs being very powerful. This explains the butchering of the large emirates and the establishment of centralized authorities among some non-Muslim groups. But even in respect of the non-Muslims, they disregarded the pre-existing political conditions and refused to recognize the authority of some obviously powerful local chiefs much more to extend it. In short, those chiefs who should have been elevated to paramountcy had their positions undermined. The

49. Hogben, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

50. *ibid.*, p. 159.

51. *ibid.*, p. 149.

52. *ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

53. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6.

main concern of the British was loyalty; consequently, only very loyal local chiefs, such as collaborators at the time of the invasion, or political agents such as grooms, messengers and the like, were supported and given all encouragement to emerge as powerful 'chiefs' to foster more efficient colonial control.

The new chiefs created by the British in the Middle Belt area, as well as the emirs they had appointed—including the Sultan and the Shehu of Borno—had letters of appointment charging them to "obey and help the Residents" and to remain loyal to the colonial government in all matters whatsoever. The British transformed the emirs and chiefs into good agents of the administration—to enforce British policy and bear the hatred of the *talakawa* (common people).<sup>54</sup> It is this system that has been described as 'Indirect Rule' or an 'Anglo-African' government—the British and the African systems forming a single government, the officials of each complementing the other and working in co-operation for the common good, (actually for the good of the British).<sup>55</sup> The adoption of the emirate and its extension over the people of the Middle Belt area was done because the British were conscious of the limitation of their power, not because they admired how the emirates were governed.<sup>56</sup> Faced with the lack of sufficient resources and personnel, governing through 'native' institutions was inevitable. Consequently, these were modified with their ideas of government to suit their purpose. This was the genesis of 'Indirect Rule'—a type of cheap government which is a facade of old institutions controlled and directed by the British.

In actual fact, the British succeeded in distorting the concept of emirate. What it meant in the 19th century was different from what they made it in the Northern Provinces. Borno for example was an empire in the past, but the British termed it an emirate and treated it as such. Similarly the Hausa states of Yawuri, Abuja and Kebbi were turned into emirates and their sarakuna styled emirs. Also, a number of non-Hausa states and chieftaincies got converted to emirates, viz; Biu, Fika, Gumel and Bedde. Thus, an emirate came to mean any centralized Native Authority whose ruler was a Muslim.<sup>57</sup> The position of the emirates was further obliterated by the British provincial system. Some of the provinces comprised a number of emirates. Kano, for example, was at first made up of the emirates of Kano, Katsina, Daura, Katagum, Hadejia, Misau and Jama'are. Other emirates were merged with non-Muslim 'independent' districts to form provinces, such as Muri and Yola. Each province came under a British Resident—a lieutenant of the High Commissioner, just as the early emirs were of the *Amir al-Muminin* (commander of the faithful) at the beginning of the 19th century. Whereas in that century all emirs, irrespective of the size of the territory they controlled, were of equal rank, under the British they were classified either first, second or third class on a basis that is difficult to know. In Sokoto Province, the Sultan and the Emir of Gwandu were both first class. Similarly, in

54. In the eyes of the British colonial administration, all chiefs, including even the Sultan, were agents of the Government and the authority of the Resident was above theirs. See Heussler, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

55. *ibid.*, p. 13ff.

56. Moreover, the people knew that the emirs and chiefs were not the real rulers; they were maintained as of necessity.

57. Even this definition does not fit because not all the early British-promoted emirs were Muslims. Kitoro Gani of Bussa for example was not a Muslim.



Bauchi the two emirs, of Bauchi itself and Gombe, were first class. In Adamawa, on the other hand, while the Lamido was first class, the Emir of Muri was second. Also in Kano Province out of eight emirs only those of Kano and Katsina were rated first class. Some of the new emirs—those created by the British—were even ranked higher than some of the older ones. The Emirs of Bussa and Kiama were all first class.<sup>58</sup> It is apparent that by creating more emirs the British knew that the prestige of the institution would be undermined, and by classifying them into first, second or third class, they made it more impossible for all of them to work against the colonial administration. Each emir became more concerned with rendering loyal service either to maintain his position or to be honoured with a knighthood and promotion.<sup>59</sup>

### Protest Movements and Political Awakening

The first three decades of British colonial rule in the Northern Provinces was a period of enormous changes. It witnessed the curtailing of the powers of emirs and other traditional rulers, and the reduction of the size of the large emirates. In name, the emirs were free to govern their people, but, in actual fact, they were under the control of the Residents and the District Officers. Outside the emirates, among the non-Muslim people of the Middle Belt area, the major changes included the imposition of British supported chiefs over groups that had been independent, weakening the power and authority of authentic chiefs and placing some groups under the emirates rather than constituting them into centralized chieftaincies. But despite these changes, it was claimed there were no protests or rebellion and that the people of the Northern Provinces accepted British overlordship. Certainly, this may have appeared so because very little was known about the early colonial experience of the Northern Provinces. In fact, in various parts of the protectorate, more especially in areas outside the emirates and Borno, the imposition and growth of colonial control were strongly resisted by the Muslims and the non-Muslims alike. The reaction of the people to the changes was violently expressed in various ways. But the various protests were generally dismissed by the British as defiance of government due not for independence (or discontent) but for "a desire to continue the habits of murder, robbery and cannibalism".<sup>60</sup> This explanation is totally unacceptable.

It is time we start questioning the coined terms used to dismiss the action of people who for long had succeeded in resisting Muslim overlordship and at the beginning of colonial rule continued to do so in respect of the British. True, for the non-Muslims, it was a continuation of old habits, though not of lawlessness but of resistance. The colonial administrative records of the early years are full of accounts of ethnic groups obstructing trade by highway robbery and murder of traders. Similarly, references are made to cannibals, head hunters and the like. Thus, a picture of an unorganized or lawless society was painted and the British had to employ force to restore law and order. The so-called breakdown of law and order was, according to the British,

58. M. Crowder, *Revolt in Bussa*, London, 1973.

59. All Residents had been under instruction to be constantly seeking for suitable candidates from the dynasties for possible appointment as emirs. Thus, the incumbent emirs had to be on good terms with the Residents to maintain their positions.

60. A. Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 193.



because the old enemy of the 'pagans', the Muslim slave raiders, were defeated and so the former seized the opportunity to settle old scores with the latter. But the British were as much the target of attacks as the 'Muslim slave raiders'. That a British political officer was killed, along with some African police or soldiers, did not amount to defiance or resistance. Also, an attack upon a British appointed 'paramount' chief leading to his death, was nothing but murder due to lawlessness. Such and similar episodes characterize the early period of British colonial administration of the Northern Provinces. It is essential therefore to examine the real reasons that gave rise to them.

The unrest in various parts of the Northern Provinces was, in the early years, a result certainly of the breakdown of law and order following the overthrow of institutions responsible for their maintenance. But in later years, the attacks on touring patrols and officials were undoubtedly, the manifestation of opposition to British reforms. The ones that gave rise to widespread unrest included the deployment of fief-holders to reside permanently in their fiefs as district heads, the imposition and enforcement of a regular taxation system and the subordination of hither autonomous groups to British appointed chiefs. Under the emirate system of the 19th century, all officials resided in the capitals and were watched and directed by the emirs. This minimized the tendency of their becoming too powerful for the emirs' effective control. But after 1902, the officials in charge of districts in the emirates and Borno were no longer required to stay in the capital but had to move to the districts under their responsibility.<sup>61</sup> This was designed not only to weaken the position and authority of the emirs, but also to bring about more stringent colonial control and to facilitate better collection of taxes. However, in Kano emirate, as Paden tried to show, the British carving of districts each under a residential ruler resulted in centralizing rural administration in Kano city.<sup>62</sup> But this was because the district heads were drawn from a lineage of the Sullubawa clan. Consequently, the authority in the emirate shifted from "ethnic (Fulani) rule, not only to clan rule (Sullubawa) but also to lineage rule"—the family of the emir appointed by the British.<sup>63</sup> The family of the Emir Aliyu, who was defeated by the British, was totally excluded from involvement in territorial administration. The result of this change was that the direct influence of the British installed emirs was reinforced over an increased number of districts.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, some of the powers of the emir were taken over by British political officers, the Resident and his District Officers. In Kano itself, British political agents found themselves in the important office of the waziri, while another political agent became the alkali in the 1920s.<sup>65</sup>

In other emirates, the direct influence of the emirs over the districts did not increase through the appointment of district heads. Unlike in Kano, the majority of the new district heads were not members of the ruling lineage and some were not even

61. See Arnett, *op. cit.*, 14.

62. J. Paden, "The Emirship of Kano" in Crowder and Ikime, *West African Chiefs*, Ife, 1970, p. 176.

63. *ibid.*

64. *ibid.*

65. The wazir was Abbas's slave Allah Barsarki, but was deposed when he tried to build up an independent basis of power. See Paden, *ibid.*, p. 183.

members of the dynasties. Thus the direct influence of the emirs declined. Each district in the emirates was placed under British political officers to help in what was termed 'opening up', whereby the officers toured the districts to supervise the assessment and collection of taxes, and to study the resources of the people with a view to stimulating cash crop production and trade. However, the administrative changes were not very welcomed. In Zaria, for example, the region to the south of the metropolis had never been organized on a district basis, and the people were, strictly speaking, not under the Emir of Zaria. In the past, some paid tribute depending on Zaria's ability to make them do so, others paid it to escape periodic raids. But in 1905 the area was placed under the Magaji of Kachia as a district head.<sup>66</sup> He thus became paramount for other ethnic groups, other chiefs and other villages—a position he had never held in the past—and this was strongly resisted. Kuta, one of the small chieftaincies subordinated to Kachia, reacted almost immediately. The Yerima of Kuta seized the chieftaincy following the death of the old chief and declared himself no longer under the British. Consequently, Kuta was attacked by the British and the Yerima was arrested, tried and imprisoned. However, in 1907, Kuta was not only separated from Kachia but was made the headquarters of a new Western Division of Zaria Province.

There were also protests and resistance among the Gwari and the Dakarkari peoples. In 1903, it is said that the Gwari of Gussoro attacked a British political officer and released some prisoners in his custody. In 1908, the Dakarkari attacked a joint military and police patrol injuring Captain Briggs, the officer in charge, and an African soldier. In 1909, the Gwari of Gussoro again attacked a British patrol killing the officer, Mr Varnrenen and a number of constables. The reason for the unrest appears to derive from a number of factors. Firstly, there are grounds for believing that the Gwari were not satisfied with their political status after the coming of the British. Although they occupy an extensive region south of Hausaland, they had never lived as a group under a single central authority. In the 19th century, they formed parts of the emirates of Nupe, Zaria and Kontagora. The coming of the British did not alter their political status; they still remained divided among the new provinces of Zaria, Kontagora and Niger. Secondly, though in the past they formed parts of the emirates, they had never been under the effective control of the emirs and so they had not been paying regular tributes. But the British wanted to bring Gwariland under close supervision for more efficient administration and the collection of taxes. Both were impossible without a thorough understanding of the political, social and economic conditions of the communities. Hence, political officers were constantly on tour of the 'pagan' areas accompanied by military or police patrols and, like spies, they studied every aspect of the communities' lives, sending 'intelligence reports' to the protectorate government.

The Gwari, as well as the other non-Muslim groups in the protectorate resented the constant police and military visits. Others, hitherto secluded, were suspicious of the British intentions to understand not only their social, political and economic organizations but also how they behaved and lived as people. During the tours for the assessment and collection of taxes, most of the British political officers were accom-

66. Arnett, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

panied by local men, usually *jekadu* (messengers) or *yanan sarki* (emir's representatives), officials connected with tribute collection among the 'pagans' in the past. The presence of such officials was an indication that the visits by the whitemen were connected with tribute or to extend the control of the emirs over them. Thus, the British were resented as much as the emirs. There was no difference between the two. In fact, most communities assumed that the emirs were co-operating with new allies, the British, to bring about their subjugation. Another reason for the unrest was the labour demand following the beginning of railway construction into Gwari and Dakarkari lands between 1907 and 1912. During that period, lands were acquired often without compensation and the people, on top of that, were required to participate in the construction work. The emirs, chiefs and leaders of the various communities were required to organize and to supervise the supply of labour and food. Thus, some of their subjects were compelled to do construction work and others to contribute crops for the upkeep of the labourers. One of the effects of the unrest in Gwariland at that time was the stoppage of the railway construction work for some time.

There were protests also over administrative reforms such as that of Borgu in 1915 and Montol in 1916.<sup>67</sup> The Borgu area comprised a series of related but independent states of which Bussa and Kaima were the most important. Following the British occupation, Bussa and Kaima became emirates within the Borgu Province created in 1902. The hegemony of Bussa extended over northern Borgu—Illo, Wawa, Babanna and Agwara. But in 1907, Borgu Province disappeared and its two emirates were merged into Kontagora Province. Thus the Borguans lost their previous status. Also, Bussa dependencies in the western parts of Borgu, including Illo, were exercised and merged into Sokoto Province.<sup>68</sup> These measures were resented by the Borgu people, especially those of Bussa. Moreover, the Emir of Bussa was not pleased by the elevation of Kaima, which traditionally acknowledged Bussa's seniority, to a first class emirate and treated as somewhat senior to Bussa. But what brought the rebellion at Bussa in 1915 was the British decision to depose the Emir, Kitoro Gani, in favour of a more capable ruler who would become a more efficient British agent. Kitoro Gani had become unpopular to the administration because, it was said, his capacity for carrying out instructions was limited. The British described him as inefficient, incompetent and addicted to bear drinking.<sup>69</sup> 'Indirect Rule' was impossible through him and so the District Officers increasingly became the 'direct' rulers of the emirate.

In 1913, a number of administrative changes were introduced to improve local government efficiency. Bussa emirate was re-organized into districts each under a local head thereby replacing the direct influence of the emir through the *kofa* (intermediary) system. Also, metropolitan Bussa was placed under the Turaki, a former slave of the emir. The changes were not well received, especially by members of the ruling dynasty who had not been considered in the appointment of district heads. Consequently, they began to act against the newly appointed district heads by instigating people not to pay taxes. A military patrol moved into Borgu at the request of

67. See E.C. Duff, *Gazetteer of Kontagora Province*, London, 1920, pp. 3-29 and for the Montol rebellion see Fremantle, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

68. Duff, *op. cit.*, p. 26. These were the most fertile parts of the Bussa emirate.

69. Crowder, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

the District Officer. This was followed by a new administrative arrangement. Bussa emirate was dissolved, the emir was deposed and his Turaki became the district head of Bussa under the *Sarki Yama* (chief of the west) of Yawuri. In June 1915, Subuki, a younger brother of the deposed emir, led some six hundred armed men in an attack on Bussa which resulted in the killing of several members of the newly imposed local administration. The unrest continued up to the end of 1915 despite combined police-military patrols. Reports of refusal to pay taxes, highway robbery and threats against Native Authority officials became common. The British therefore found it necessary to turn back the clock. Bussa was once more separated from Yawuri, and Jibrin, a member of the ruling family, was appointed emir but with a reduced rank. The Turaki, believed to be behind the previous changes in order to improve his position, was arrested for manslaughter, tried and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. The Emir Jibrin reigned till 1924 when he too was deposed shortly after Borgu was transferred to Ilorin Province.

In the central plateau area, the Montol rebellion of 1916 was also over administrative reforms. before the British conquest, the Montol were one of the dominant plateau ethnic groups. But as already outlined, the British subordinated them to the Ankwe chief in 1909. The Montol had a number of reasons to rebel against this arrangement. Firstly, according to tradition, the Ankwe descended from a Montol mother and therefore they should by custom be subordinates.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, the Ankwe's spiritual centre, Mata Fada, lay in the Montol territory and it was with the latter's permission that the Ankwe used to visit Mata Fada for religious sacrifices. The British were either unaware of these facts or took things for granted. After all, the Montol had always been a source of trouble to their neighbours. Their subordination therefore, may have been a deliberate plan to punish them for their persistent strong opposition to the administration. To the British the Montol were but 'highway robbers'—a cliché applied to any ethnic group that had been causing trouble to the government.<sup>71</sup> Certainly, they were known for their stubborn resistance to colonial control and despite punitive expeditions dating back to 1899, they maintained their opposition to alien control. In 1916, the Montol for the seventh time revolted against the British.<sup>72</sup> This time the rebellion, which was far more serious, was in protest against their political subordination to their traditional nephews—the Ankwe. On 30 July, they attacked and killed Rapman, the chief of Ankwe district, along with two of his younger brothers. Also killed were Mr F.E. Maltby, the Assistant District Officer and fifty-eight others.<sup>73</sup> This was followed by a devastating punitive expedition which finally silenced the Montol.

Protests and resistance against the British were greater in the Middle Belt area. For a long time, there had been unrest in Tivland over the attempts to stamp out certain

70. Fremantle, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

71. Such as the Kilba and the Margi, see Migeod, *Gazetteer of Yola Province*, London, 1927 *passim*.

72. Fremantle, *op. cit.*, p. 46. These were in July 1899, June 1901, September 1902, June 1904, August 1905 and February 1909. The government was said to have been taking stern measures against them.

73. *ibid.*, p. 45.

'uncivilized customs'.<sup>74</sup> There were rebellions in other major 19th century polities also. In Zaria, for example, some Hausa towns refused to pay taxes to the emir after the British had occupied the capital in 1902.<sup>75</sup> The reason for this appears to derive from the British propaganda at the time. They declared, at the time of the invasion, that they had come to liberate the Hausa peasants from the yoke of the Fulbe emirs. Thus, when Zaria submitted to the British, some Hausa communities felt that there was no longer an emir, or that he had no authority and they were therefore independent. Payment of tax is an admission of dependence, and since the whitemen had taken over power and had declared that they had no quarrel with the Hausa, the emir ceased to have any right to their taxes, more so because they knew that the emir was deposed and exiled to Wushishi.<sup>77</sup> This may have strengthened the belief of the communities that they were no longer subject to the emir or to anyone for that matter. But they were mistaken—a military expedition under Major Crowley brought the eastern Hausa towns under control. Military power having been demonstrated, the inhabitants were told that the Emir of Zaria was still their ruler and that taxes must be paid to whoever was appointed emir.

Elsewhere in the emirates, resistance to the British took the form of Mahdism, except the rebellion at Marusa in Katsina in 1904.<sup>78</sup> The Mahdist idea was equated with the time of trouble—trouble caused by the Nasara (Europeans) or by the generality of infidels. According to popular Muslim beliefs, the Mahdi was to appear to end the trouble confronting the Muslims, cleanse the society and make arrangements for the second advent of the Messiah.<sup>79</sup> The Mahdist movement had in fact threatened the Sokoto Caliphate towards the end of the 19th century.<sup>80</sup> The British came into conflict with Mahdism first in the Sudan and then in the Northern Provinces at Burmi in 1903, and at Satiru in 1906. The latter is so far the best documented rebellion against the British in the Northern Provinces.<sup>81</sup> It proved unsuccessful because it lacked the support of the Sultan and some emirs.<sup>82</sup> However, some emirs were sympathetic to the rebellion. At Katsina, the Emir Yero on hearing about the rebellion refused to help in the preparation of a British fort in 1906. This resulted in his deposition and the disappearance of the Dallazawa dynasty.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, in Gwandu the Emir Muhammadu installed at Ambursa in 1903 was deposed in 1906 for complicity during the Satiru revolt.<sup>84</sup> Also, in Hadejia, the Emir Muhammadu was

74. See Stanhope White, *op. cit.*, p. 134. It was over the attempts to stop 'Exchange marriage'.

75. See O. Andilla, 'The Igedde Rebellion, 1928-29', Unpublished research essay, ABU, Zaria.

76. Arnett, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

77. *ibid.*

78. Grateful to Yusuf Bala Usman.

79. For a general account of Mahdism, see Gibb & Kramers, eds., *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, London, 1961, pp. 310-313.

80. Adeleye, *Power*, pp. 103-107.

81. See Perham, *op. cit.*, pp. 127, 254-5.

82. *ibid.*, p. 260.

83. Hogben, *op. cit.*, p. 93. The Dallazawa dynasty had ruled Katsina for a century, from 1806-1906.

84. *ibid.*, p. 227.



openly delighted at the outbreak of the rebellion and consequently, he began to defy British authority. As a result, an expedition was sent against Hadejia and the emir, who put up resistance, was killed in the fighting.<sup>85</sup> The Satiru rebellion was finally crushed by the British aided, of course, by the Sultan. Thus, Mahdism was nipped in the bud, at least for over a decade. Another rebellion came from Ilorin. In 1907, it is said, the Balogun Ajikobi and two other leading emirate officials—the Magajin Gari and Ajayi Ogidiolu—revolted against the emir and three other Baloguns. They also defied government order and collected about six hundred hunters to attack the Residency.<sup>86</sup> This rebellion may have been because the emir, under the control of the Balogun Alanamu, was merely a British puppet. But very soon order was restored following the arrival of British troops.

There was a further upsurge of Mahdism in the Northern Provinces during and after the First World War. This was related to effects of the war on the Muslim world. In the course of the 1914-18 war, the allies promised independence to the Arabs, but it was mere propaganda aimed at obtaining their support against the Ottoman Caliphate which was in control of the Arab world.<sup>87</sup> The colonial control of Britain and France, both members of the Allied command against Germany and the Ottoman Caliphate, extended over Muslims outside the Arab world. The two powers were therefore concerned with avoiding Muslim hostility which they feared would jeopardize the progress of the war. In the Northern Provinces, the British, in order to obtain Muslim support, propagated the idea that the Arabs were in fact behind the allies. This idea was generally accepted by the emirs who, instead of causing trouble, contributed generously to the war effort.<sup>88</sup> However, some chiefs had not taken a definite stand. On the Cameroun-Nigeria border for example, some chiefs played a double role, accepting subsidies from both the Germans and the British.<sup>89</sup> Unlike the other parts of the Northern Provinces, the Nigeria-Cameroun border area was affected by the Europeans' war. There were German military incursions at various places causing widespread devastation and unrest.<sup>90</sup> It is not surprising therefore that in 1916 a local Mahdi, styled 'Mai Rigan Karfe' (the man with the chain armour) arose in the middle Benue area to lead the fight against the Europeans. From their centre at Nukko, the Mahdists, after attacking some villages, threatened the British at Donga. But, it is said, they were surprised and defeated at Nukko hill and their leader was captured. He was subsequently put on trial and sentenced to death by execution in 1917.

The Mahdist uprising appears to have been a protest not only against the hardship and insecurity following the extension of the Europeans' war into the borderland area, but also against the undermining of Muslim hegemony in the region. That the

85. *ibid.*, p. 267.

86. *ibid.*, p. 159.

87. The amount contributed by Muri emirate was N2,347 (Fremantle, p. 72) and N3,500 by Zaria (Arnett, p. 35).

88. On 7 November 1914, the Ottoman Caliph issued a fatwa which declared the duty of all Muslims to unite in arms against Britain, France and Russia as enemies of Islam, see P.M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, London, 1966, p. 263.

89. Such as the Chief of Madagali, Hamman Yaji, a well-known Mahdist who was eventually deposed by the British in 1927.

90. See Fremantle, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-72.

uprising was serious is supported by the admission that but for the timely intervention of the army and police the unrest would have spread to various areas in the middle Benue region. Apart from the Mahdist uprising at Nukko in 1916 and the double role of the borderland chiefs there were no other troubles to the British in the emirates during the war. The only problem was that the stand of the Shehu of Borno was not clear. Perhaps, he was reluctant to throw his whole weight behind the British because of Borno's old links with the Ottoman Caliphate. But as regards the emirs, two things appear to explain their stand behind the British. Firstly, the Sokoto Caliphate had no connection with the Ottoman's in the past. Secondly, and perhaps more important, the emirs appear to have been carried by the British propaganda of championing the cause of orthodox Islam which most of them stood for.

The war came to an end in 1918 and so the Allies no longer required Muslim support or sympathy. In fact, the Western powers, instead of granting independence to the Arabs, imposed mandates on them thereby dishonouring their war pledges. The Muslim world lost its independence to the Europeans and the Arabs increasingly came under their control. There were thus widespread rebellions and demands for their rights, but the Arabs were suppressed by force. In Egypt, for example, the British deported and imprisoned people demanding the fulfillment of the allies' promises.<sup>91</sup> In other parts of North Africa, the French also suppressed demands for liberty and independence. Thus, the attitude of the Allies towards the Muslims hardened after the First World war. Only in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was the situation different. Unlike other parts of the Arab world, in the Sudan, the British had cultivated and obtained the support of conservative Sheikhs who were employed as agents during the course of the war. Subsequently, the influence of such Sheikhs was consciously built up in order to buttress subversive tendencies.<sup>92</sup>

The Muslims in the Northern Provinces were not unaware of developments in the Arab world. Through the usual annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land and journeys for the pursuit of advanced knowledge at Muslim institutions of higher learning in Egypt and the Sudan, the Muslims in the Northern Provinces were alive to events in those parts of the world. It is not surprising therefore that Mahdism was reactivated as a vanguard to protest against the prolongation of British rule in the emirates and Borno. This time, the movement was not led by an upstart but by Sa'id, the son of the 19th century Mahdist leader in the Sokoto Caliphate.<sup>93</sup> The movement developed almost to a stage of armed uprising in the 1920s. Sa'id's base at Bunbulwa in Fika emirate, attracted a large following of dissidents and malcontents. In 1922, the British claimed

91. In Egypt, those imprisoned included Zaghul and three of his colleagues in the post-war Egyptian cabinet. See Holt, *op. cit.*, p. 297, and for the French action in North Africa, see Jacques Berque, *French North Africa*, London, 1967, pp. 20-32.

92. These were the leaders of the principal Tariqas, Sayyid Abdal-Rahman al-Mahdi, Sir Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani (knighted in 1919 for his role during the war) and Sharif Yusuf al-Hindi. The three had, in 1919, requested the government to "institute among their followers a kind of propaganda which will endeavour to foster loyalty and co-operation with the British". See Abd al-Rahman, M., *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 100-101.

93. See *Mahdism, 1919-1929* (SNP 17/1, Acc. 119/715, National Archives, Kaduna).

to have discovered a plot aimed at unseating the Sultan Muhammadu Mai Turare because of his strong inclination to the British. In 1923, the Resident of Borno also reported a plan by the Mahdists to incite the army unit at Maiduguri to revolt. These disclosures were sufficient to alarm the British colonial administration. Consequently, the Mahdist centre, Bunbulwa, was attacked and broken up. Its leader, Sa'id b. Hayat, was arrested and detained at Buea until 1945.<sup>94</sup> Subsequent investigations revealed that there were plans for arms import from North Africa and that the Lamido of Adamawa was involved. He was therefore reprimanded. Thus, the Mahdist movement under Sa'id was destroyed, but there was still unrest in other emirates. In Gwandu, for example, the Mahdists at Besse posed a big threat to the colonial administration in 1923, and in Katsina, a notable Mahdist group, the Salihawa, continued passive resistance to the British down to the 1940s.<sup>95</sup>

The main result of the Mahdist threat in the Northern Provinces was more stringent colonial control. The British reinforced frontier patrols especially along the border with the French territory to the north and east. Arrangements were also concluded with the French for a common policy towards Muslim dissidents and the Mahdists. Undoubtedly, the Mahdist movement had led to panic in the 1920s and the British felt that the whole imperial structure was at stake. A new approach to the question of governing the Muslims in the Northern Provinces was felt to be necessary. So, in 1925, Palmer was appointed Lieutenant Governor and during his period, policies designed to eliminate all traces of Mahdism and other subversive tendencies were pursued. It was Palmer who built up the position of loyal emirs and chiefs heading powerful sole Native Authorities to suppress sedition.<sup>96</sup> But even then, the emirs, chiefs and the Native Authorities were not all that powerful and effective. In the Sokoto area, as Sharwood-Smith points out, there had been something approaching a breakdown in authority during the late 1920s.<sup>97</sup> Around Gusau, for example, bands of lawless men roamed the highways, plundering warfarers at will. Also, notorious criminals openly stalked the streets and market places of the larger towns. The local officials; such as the district and village heads, seemed either afraid to interfere or were themselves in league with the bandits,<sup>98</sup> probably because they were opposed to the whitemen's rule. This illustrates the dilemma of the traditional rulers, the emirs and chiefs. They were expected to be loyal to the British, but their positions also entailed loyalty to Islam and to the welfare of their subjects. But by constantly talking about the fear of Mahdism which some emirs equally feared, the British continued to treat them as agents of the colonial administration.

So concerned with the preservation of law and order—necessary for economic exploitation—and so afraid of sedition, the British paid more attention to the

94. *ibid.*

95. In the districts of Katsina emirates, Fawwa-Kankara, Ruma and Yandaka, there were over 15 Salihawa communities. The first developed in 1911. See District Notebooks (NAK Katproof/1-13). The Salihawa were constantly watched and reported upon by the British officials in Katsina. They shunned all European goods.

96. See Heussler, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-65.

97. B. Sharwood Smith, *But Always as Friends*, London, 1967, p. 66.

98. *ibid.*

emirates. Most of their able administrators were deployed to the powerful Muslim emirates while the Middle Belt area received less experienced, usually new recruits as District Officers. This explains the unrest in the latter parts of the Northern Provinces and the British perfect hold on the former. Thus, during the period of Palmer, 1925-30, 'Indirect Rule' became inviolate. With the emergence of more powerful sole Native Authorities and the British unwillingness to interfere too much in local government matters, the Northern Provinces entered a period of great inactivity. The British had surrendered to the traditional rulers, the Residents and District Officers were reluctant to direct affairs openly for fear of tampering with the dignity of the local rulers. They were content merely with directing and controlling the emirs and chiefs from the background. In turn, the emirs and chiefs were to direct their officials and govern their subjects but in a manner conducive to the British. Thus, the old institutions, discredited by military defeat and then revived in an altered way, had, in the 1930s, assumed some sort of sanctity. It appears that the British became convinced that the best way to hold the Northern Provinces and to maintain law and order against strong resistance was not to tamper with local life and local administration but to leave their powerful agents, emirs and chiefs, in full control. After all, their loyalty had stood the test of time and it was no longer in doubt.

After the era of Palmer, the Northern Provinces entered a period of conservatism. This too was because the British administrators had wanted it. Since the amalgamation in 1914, the Northern and Southern Protectorates maintained separate identities. But in the 1930s, serious attempts were made by the British central officials to direct the affairs of the whole country from Lagos. They felt that the North was lagging behind the South in many aspects and the need was therefore expressed to "jolly the emirates into the 20th century".<sup>99</sup> However, the British officials in the North condoned rigid adherence to traditions and they wanted the protectorate "to develop on its own lines".<sup>100</sup> They also maintained that the North was different from the South in many ways. Consequently, they were not prepared to change the status quo or to allow the "enslavement of the Moslem by the semi-Europeanised South".<sup>101</sup> The North in their view had to be protected by recognising its education and social weaknesses—both being the result of various British policies. During the governorship of Cameron, the British officials in the North were accused of building up the authority and positions of emirs and chiefs only for administrative convenience.<sup>102</sup> He called for far-reaching reforms because the Native Authorities were not representative either of the Muslims or of the non-Muslims. The interests of the masses—the bulk of the taxpayers—were never taken into consideration. In order to remedy the situation, Cameron suggested the reconstitution of local administration so that no community would have to accept rule by outsiders. Also, there should be provisions whereby the different communities would be represented in councils and some should be removed from the jurisdiction of the Native Authorities under which they had been willy-nilly

99. Heussler, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

100. Mary Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

101. Heussler, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

102. *ibid.*, p. 72.



placed. But the call for reforms by Cameron was not well received by the British officials in the North.

For the Northern British colonial administrators, Cameron's suggestions were very revolutionary at that time. Even though the issues involved affected the future of the entire people of the North, neither they nor their rulers were consulted. The Northern officials were afraid of upsetting 'Indirect Rule' by hasty changes. Another example which supports the thesis that the British wanted the North to remain conservative was the case of the emir of Hadejia.<sup>103</sup> He had wanted a capable, energetic local official appointed to his council, but the Resident of Kano refused on the ground that the man in question was of slave origin and he might probably not be well respected by the public. Similarly, in 1937 a proposal to seat the Sultan in the Legislative Council in Lagos was not favoured by the Northern High Commissioner and he subsequently influenced the Sultan to turn down the offer.<sup>104</sup> Thus, it is totally wrong to say that the people of the North and their rulers opposed change and that they wanted their societies to function as they had existed prior to the British advent. No society in history has ever been static. The British in the North introduced the sort of changes that they considered necessary for the control of the society and for its economic exploitation; further changes only meant hastening the period of their departure.

Northern 'conservatism' was heightened by the British through the limited encouragement they gave to Western education and the stifling of Islamic education. While in the Southern Protectorate missionaries were allowed to establish their institutions, in the North it was not possible for them. The policy of the British in the protectorate was to discourage missionary activity. The reason commonly advanced is that it was in keeping with the early pledge of Lugard to the emirs.<sup>105</sup> But it would appear that the policy was more in keeping with the desire to maintain Northern developments strictly 'on native lines' and to avoid moulding the people in imitation of the European societies—educated and Christian. Thus, the processes of Christianization, hence Westernization, should be controlled. However, since the majority of Northern inhabitants were Muslims, one would have expected the British in keeping with their policy to patronize the Muslim system of education. But not only was Western education denied, Islamic education received no encouragement. During the early years of colonial rule, the business of the Native Authority was conducted in Arabic and correspondence was in *ajami* (arabic letters). But this was abandoned very early because the British thought they had been aiding the spread of Islam. Consequently, the need to train scribes in roman script for the Native Authorities arose and gave rise to the first school for mallams in Sokoto.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, the establishment of

103. *ibid.*, p. 116. That was in 1937 when Shehu Makama was considered for appointment into the Council. Thus, it was the British and not the emirs, who were tied to changelessness. The Hadejia case shows that the emirs wanted to break free of some traditions.

104. *ibid.*

105. After the fall of the Caliphate, Lugard had promised not to interfere in religious matters. See Perham, *op. cit.*, p. 129. But at the same time, there was the fear of replacing 'a patriarchal and venerable system of government (the Emirates) by a discontented and irresponsible democracy of semi-educated politicians', Bell and Hiskett, *Journal of African Societies*, 1911, p. 391.

106. Mary Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 72. It was established by Burdon in 1905.



Native Treasuries and land reforms created the need for qualified personnel for preparing estimates and for accounting, as well as men trained in elementary surveying. Thus, the British became desirous of introducing Western education in order to train men to shoulder the new responsibilities which their presence demanded.

The British in the Northern Protectorate were not opposed to conversion of people to Christianity; they were mainly concerned with avoiding hostile reaction from the Muslim rulers if the missionaries were allowed to freely and openly undertake such a task. They feared uprisings such as the Satiru revolt in 1906 and the possible combination of all emirates against them. Thus, anything that was likely to arouse the Muslims had to be abandoned. In keeping to this policy, the colonial administration took over the control of Western education and outlined the purpose for its introduction.<sup>107</sup> Firstly, to enable the mallams, already educated along Islamic lines, to learn to write in *boko* (Roman script) and not in the Muslim *ajami* which was incomprehensible to some British officials. This would enable the latter to understand better the transaction of Native Authority business. Secondly, it was hoped through Western education to train the sons of chiefs in order to bring them up in an "atmosphere of loyalty to the King [British] and imbued with ideals of truthfulness and loyalty so that the next generation of native rulers may be enlightened and loyal without necessarily foregoing their own religion and imbibing ideas of European[s]".<sup>108</sup> Thirdly, to give general primary education on a secular basis and lastly, for the teaching of the children of non-native employees of the government. Thus, the system of providing Western education to the Northern peoples had, right from its inception, been decidedly guarded in order to maintain the status quo, to ensure development on 'native lines' and to prevent the bringing up of a generation of rebels as in the South.

In the Southern Protectorate, since Western education was more freely pursued, highly educated elements, both professional and academic, had emerged and were, by the 1930s, struggling not only for parity with the British for government employment, but also were demanding treatment as 'civilized' men of dignity. In the North, on the other hand, the 1930s constituted period of conservatism. The British, especially after the Mahdist abortive rebellion, isolated the Northern Provinces from the South and the Islamic world so as to prevent the possible penetration of subversive influences.<sup>109</sup> It was this and the desire to maintain the tyranny of the British controlled Native Authorities rather than the restriction of missionary activity that account for the differential development between the North and the South in the field of Western education and its consequent Westernization. True, Muslims were generally apathetic to non-Islamic forms of education. The big reason was because the latter, especially, the Western type, departed from and had no connection with Islamic religion. Moreover, in the Northern Provinces, the benefits to be derived from Western education were at first not quite apparent. It was not a criterion for social or political

107. See *Annual Reports*, 1905-1907, pp. 118-19.

108. *ibid.*

109. The *sabon-gari* (new towns) in the North was originated by Temple to prevent collusion between the educated natives (Southern Nigerians) and the courteous Muslims. The former constituted "a veritable danger to the sacred institutions of the indigenous society", see Ayandeke, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

advance. Thus, there were not sufficient incentives to break down the basic Muslim prejudices. Equally true was the unwillingness of the British to give free and liberal Western forms of education because doing so would amount to the "transmogrification of the dignified and courteous Moslem into a trousered burlesque with a veneer of European civilization".<sup>110</sup> Thus, the denial of Western education accentuated the traditionalism of the North and gave unrestricted and unchallengeable power to the British Residents, the District Officers and the chiefs under their control.

The British in the North did not encourage the pursuit of Islamic education either. The rest of the Muslim world, especially Egypt and Turkey, had, after the First World War, fallen into rapid intellectual change. Through regular contacts with the Western world, they had begun assimilating the opportunities of the West within the context of Islam. The North would have been orientated to develop on those lines, but the British were afraid of collusion between the Arab dissidents and the 'courteous Moslem' of the North. In the Arab world, as pointed out, the imposition of mandates was very much resented and was followed by widespread unrest and anti-European feelings. In Egypt, for example, the famous al-Azhar—an important centre of learning for Muslims from different parts of the world—became the breeding ground for young Muslim militants. Up to the 1920s students from the Northern Provinces had been free to travel for studies at al-Azhar. Such students eventually returned with new ideas and with Arabic literature on various topics. But following the Mahdist planned uprising in the northern Provinces and the Arabs' change of attitude towards the Europeans over the loss of their independence, the British became reluctant to allow students from the North to proceed to al-Azhar for studies. Also discouraged was the importation of Arabic literature, especially those of *siyas* (politics) which were very critical of the Europeans.<sup>111</sup> Thus the British were not prepared to sanction contact between the North and Egypt whose society was very revolutionary. Instead, they wanted it to develop more contacts with the Sudan, a country where British control was firmer through alliance with the conservative Sheikhs whose tendencies were holding back the society. It was this kind of situation that eventually developed in the North except that the associates in this case were not Sheikhs but emirs and chiefs.

It has been said that the effects of British policies in the emirates made the emirs autocratic. This is nothing but a myth. True, the powers of the emirs did not very much depend upon popular support and so their rule may have been independent vis-à-vis the people, but certainly, not in respect of the British. They may have been 'partners' of the British in local administration, but they had lost authority for policy formulation as well as control of emirate economies. The emirs became mere civil servants—salaried staff of the Native Authorities supervising tax drives, assessment and collections. They played no role in the policy-making organ of the colonial

110. The British administrators were certainly very scared of the educated Nigerians, especially in Lagos, for their persistent criticism of government policies. They were not ready to allow the same thing to develop in the Northern Provinces. See Perham, *op. cit.*, p. 581ff. and Ayandele, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

111. For a long time, the British were scared of Islamic-based nationalism. Al-Azhar, recently, had been a strong centre propagating Islamic nationalism. It inspired the Algerians to organize new type of Muslim schools different from the traditional maraboutic type—the leading Algerian nationalists, Ben Bella and Boumedienne, emerged from such schools.

government, but only implemented what had been directed by the administration. Moreover, the ways of conducting affairs under the British were not governed by the shari'a. In the 19th century, the emirs were more concerned with *maslaha* (peoples' welfare) but under colonial rule, it became more a question of promoting British interests. The emirs who became very powerful, and there were a number of them, were so because the British built up their positions, promoted their authority so as to keep effective local control. But no emir, however powerful, was beyond British control, for no emir was above deposition if he did not abide by directives.

The development of British colonial rule in the North was accompanied by enormous changes, but even then, it is claimed, there had not been any serious protests. The generally advanced view is that the North was made to wake up to the horrible realities of its conditions due to the influence of the South.<sup>112</sup> Thus, political awakening in the North was a result of prodding from the Southern Protectorate. Undoubtedly, such misconceptions stemmed from the fact that the articulate championing of Nigeria's independence was initiated by the western educated élite in that part of the country. This being the case, when similar developments started in the Northern Protectorate, it was easy to assume that either the North was following the example of the South or that it was reacting due to the latter's influence. The big assumption in this respect is that Western education is necessary for political awakening and that people not educated in that line can not be nationalistic. This is unacceptable. Western education is not a pre-requisite for political awakening or nationalism. The latter, for our purpose, is the love of one's country and its institutions, and the desire to free it from foreign control or domination.

It is true that the struggle against the British, for their withdrawal from the North, started only in the 1940s. But this is not because 'Indirect Rule' placed local government matters in local hands, and that traditional institutions had been functioning as before and therefore the people were generally content. In fact, certain factors tended to discourage the early development of nationalist activities in the North. Firstly, prior to the British conquest, the North had not existed as a single polity. Rather, it was a conglomeration of states and communities which, though having many things in common, lacked the sense of oneness and of common destiny. This started to develop in the 1940s. It can be argued that Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate comprised more than half of the new Northern Provinces, but they had not struggled against the British. The explanation for this is that while Borno was devastated by an alien invasion before the British advent, in the Sokoto Caliphate there had been the belief of a catastrophic event occurring to herald the approach of the end of time. Thus, the British period in Borno was one of recovery. In the Sokoto Caliphate, on the other hand, the coming of the British was regarded by the emirs and the *ulama* (scholars) as part of the process towards the end of the world. They put up resistance but only half-heartedly because they could not delay or prevent the will of God. It was also believed that the British stay was going to be for a very short duration and was to be followed by the advance of the guided one — al-Mahdi.

112. J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley, 1963, p. 360. But the view that the "Southern nationalist have stirred the North out of lethargy" has been dismissed by G.O. Olusanya "Political Awakening in the North", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 4, No. 1, December 1967.

In the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, the people were generally not obsessed with the presence of the Nasara, their presence was ordained and so was their departure. Thus, even if there was no struggle, *in sha Allah*, the British would quit sooner or later. Since it was generally believed that the Mahdi was to emerge in the East, discontent with the state of affairs under the British was expressed by some through abandonment—migration from the emirates to the East. But a large proportion of the population believed that the presence of the Europeans was in itself a period of hardship, not one of ease. Peace, happiness and tranquility were to prevail after the Mahdist advent. So toleration was usually advocated not militancy or defiance. The Mahdist movement under Sa'id b. Hayat falls in line with the general belief that only the Mahdi could save the people from the control of the European. But by the 1940s, the old generation which held such ideas was being gradually replaced by men who were born and bred under the British system and who began to realize the hopelessness of the emirate conditions and to look back to the golden times of the past with deep admiration. Unlike the old, the new generation, partly educated on Western lines, started to struggle on the European pattern and in the language of the British.

The second factor to account for the late political awakening of the North is rooted in the method by which the British acceded to power and the manner in which they established their control. The Northern Provinces came into being through a devastating conquest which was followed by a thorough pacification. Eventually, the power of the people was greatly weakened. The British proceeded to establish their control by deposing rulers of doubtful loyalty and appointing men whose dependence on them was necessary. Also, some of the old pre-British large polities were divided; the Caliphate itself disappeared and the emirates became the major units for local government. But these two were sub-divided into districts each with its head. These changes undoubtedly, obscured the consciousness of belonging to a large and hitherto powerful polity. Thus, even if the people were discontented, they could only fight for their districts, chieftaincies, communities and probably for their emirates, but not for the whole of the Northern Provinces, the significance of which very few appreciated. In short, the people were concerned with issues affecting their localities. The North was not conscious of its corporate existence. This too started to emerge in the 1940s when the wall separating the emirates from one another and from the Middle Belt area cracked.

The emirs and chiefs under the British became more concerned with their individual fate and so they no longer championed the cause of the people. The ulama and priests of ethnic religions at first supplied the bulk of dissident leadership, but the stern measures taken against the early leaders cowed them. Thereafter they were prepared to preach but not to fight.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, if conditions in the emirates become

113. Preachers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, had for long been very active against the British in the Northern Provinces. In 1902, M. Maizana had proclaimed himself the 'Mahdi' in Nupe and invited people to expel the British. In 1906, a Muslim preacher in Kontagora spoke of not paying taxes. In that year, two similar preachers appeared in Jebba and Yelwa respectively. Also in Bauchi and Gombe a number of preachers called for the extermination of the British infidels. See Adeleye, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-22. Among the non-Muslim, the leading preacher emerged at Isge among the Margi. The 'prophet' claimed that he was ordered by God to tell the people that a time of great hardship is at hand and that the Europeans are leaving the land. He asked the people to prepare for arms and to make sacrifices of hen. Consequently, many young men flocked to him and being fully armed they started causing trouble. At last the 'prophet' was arrested, tried at Dikwa and sentenced to ten years. See Stanhope White, *op. cit.*, p. 110.



impossible for the ulama, there was always the possibility of retreat by setting out for the Holy Pilgrimage.<sup>114</sup> Thus the people became leaderless and therefore inactive until the late 1940s. In the South, political awakening started much earlier and this was largely due to British treatment of the Western educated elements. Such people, despite their education, had very limited opportunities both in the colonial service which their education qualified them for entry and in local authorities which the British wanted to remain under traditional men. But in the North, such men did not exist. As pointed out earlier, the type of Western education provided in the North was designed to prepare people for specific duties and its quality was also very low compared to the South. Thus, the processes of "political and social sophistication" on Western lines were very slow.<sup>115</sup> Also, the few very low Western educated elements in the North had no grievances; the majority of them were members of the ruling élite trained to join the services of the Native Authorities. As individuals, each had an assured future.

The spread of Western education in the North was indeed very slow, but what is remarkable is that by the 1920s an important college had emerged, drawing students from the different parts of the protectorate, students of varying background, religion and ethnic group. Gradually therefore, isolation was giving way to contacts and understanding, the different students were beginning to see themselves as belonging to a single territory. After graduation the contacts continued, some joined the Native Authorities, and others became teachers in the provincial schools and were liable to be posted to any province. Thus, Northern consciousness also began to develop. But as civil servants such men could not form or belong to political parties or associations. Their early activities were therefore limited to discussion groups, improvement associations and the like.<sup>116</sup> It was such men that are believed to have been inspired by the élite of the Southern Protectorate. If there had been any inspiration, then it must have been either through Western education or the mass media.

However, we know that virtually all the Western educated elements in the North received their education within the territory.<sup>117</sup> Also, the majority of the élite in the South confined themselves and their activities to the South, mainly in Lagos, and they were in many ways ignorant about the North. The Southern elements found in the North up to the 1940s were mainly trading communities and government employees—mainly clerical staff and railway workers. While the latter were uneducated, the clerical staff, *akawuna*, were half-educated and proud of associating with the white-

114. Migration had been the traditional way of expressing dissent by the ulama in the emirates.

115. Ayandele, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

116. The first was the 'Zaria Friendly Society' formed by Sa'ad Zungur, then, the 'Bauchi General Improvement Union' by the same in 1943; both were very radical movements directed against the autocracy of the sole Native Authorities. In 1944, the Bauchi discussion Circle was formed by Abubakar Tafawa and Yahya Gusau—it was a more moderate association. In 1945, the Youth's Social Circle was formed in Sokoto by Shehu Shagari and Ibrahim Gusau. Finally, in 1948 the Kano Youth's Association under Sani Dama was formed and a more radical one the *Taron Masu Zumunta* by Abba Maikwaru. See B.J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, London, 1968, p. 78.

117. Mainly at the Katsina College, founded in 1922, except perhaps Sa'adu Zungur who had been to the Yaba Higher College.



man; they too behaved as Europeans and looked down upon Nigerian culture.<sup>118</sup> Such misfits in society could not become nationalists or desire the Europeans to leave and so it is doubtful if they influenced the Northern thinking of that period. The only remaining avenue for Southern influence on Northern thought was through the press. In Katsina, for example, it is known that the *West African Pilot* was being read by junior Native Authority staff against the wishes of the British and senior local officials in the 1940s. But, on the whole, the circulation of the Southern papers was very limited and the North had no newspaper independent of government control.

To say that the North was awakened to the horrible realities of its conditions means that the people were not only lethargic but that outsiders knew better about that society and what was good for it. In fact, as we outlined, the North since the 1920s was isolated and the entry of dissident literature censored. So it is absurd to lay any emphasis on outside inspiration—Southern, Eastern or Western—in the Northern political awakening. The desire for freedom is not restricted to intellectuals; it is equally the yearning of peasants. Certainly, there was widespread discontent with British rule and with their handling of affairs at the grassroot level. Also, rebellion and protests were common, but these were mainly over local matters and the British effectively dealt with each. Eventually, in the 1940s, the few Western educated elements, men with wider horizons, mainly in the services of the Native Authorities, disappointed with the general inactivity began to 'say it loud' that the regime of powerful but inactive Native Authorities ought to be changed.<sup>119</sup> Their priorities were not the immediate departure of the British or equal employment opportunities with them, but reforms for the improvement of the Northern society, especially the lot of the *talakawa* (common people). It can be said that it was mainly in the Northern Provinces that an authentic popular nationalist movement emerged. A movement that surpassed all others in the country in the degree to which it challenged the status quo and shook the society.

In the early 1950s the constitutional changes in the country created the need for political parties, and so the active, Western educated elements in the North converted their improvement associations into political parties, the Northern People's Congress and the Northern Elements Progressive Union.<sup>120</sup> The message of the latter was very relevant to the conditions of the *talakawa* as well as to the indigenous conditions of politics. The various messages were expressed through popular local literature, poems and songs in both boko and ajami sung by musicians the *goge* for example or by common folks.<sup>121</sup> In no other part of this country was such literature produced.

118. *Akawu* is the Hausa word for clerk and for all people who while being Africans imitate the Europeans' ways and habits.

119. A.T. Balewa, for example, had criticized the sole N.A.'s system as being incompatible with Islamic principles. It was a mere dictatorship: "We cannot afford to stagnate . . . ignorance must somehow be removed and the people made to realise that they too have a share in their government" and called for N.A. reforms. (NHAS Debates, 19 August 1950.)

120. See Dudley, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-90.

121. A large collection of such works in Hausa exists in the Northern History Research Scheme, Zaria. The *wakoki* so far published are those of Sa'ad Zungur (Zaria 1960) and M. Mua'zu Hadejia. The former's "Arewa Jumhuriya ko Mulukiya" is the most celebrated. Of the unpublished, see the NEPU songs in the possession of M. Gambo Hawaja, Zaria.

literature that really shook people and made those in authority seriously think about the society and its future. This is a measure of the profundity of the nationalist movement in the Northern Provinces. In the South, the nationalists were more concerned with replacing the British in the civil service, in commerce, as well as assuming the Nigerian leadership. The struggle was a question of Nigerianizing, which at that time meant the Western educated taking over the political and economic control of Nigeria. They were not very concerned with altering the whole society and creating something new for the betterment of all. The obsession with leadership led to their resort to ethnicism in the 1950s in order to obtain political control. It was in this field that the nationalists in the South greatly influenced the North. Thus, British policies in the North provoked a reaction not towards political party associations but towards self-reappraisal and critical attitude towards existing institutions with a view to drastic changes. When at last political parties emerged, emphasis was on changes and reforms, as well as preparing the society to shoulder its responsibilities. It was after this that the North committed itself to self-government and ultimate independence for Nigeria.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA SINCE 1800

R. J. GAVIN AND WALE OYEMAKINDE

In the early 19th century Nigeria's economy like the economy of practically every other country in the world was based principally on agriculture. The vast majority of the population was fully engaged in agricultural pursuits and there were very few members of society who did not have their farms and herds. Many of the farming communities that made up the bulk of the population were engaged in production for consumption and local exchange. But the term 'subsistence' that is often applied to such economies is hardly apt. Within each community and beyond, the products of the soil were stored and exchanged against other products or against men's labour. The large and small grain bins, some interspersed between each dwelling, others towering up like great pots and jars around villages in the millet and corn growing areas north of the Niger and Benue Rivers were meant to tide men over periods of want. Those who had more in those bins could subsist better than those who had less, just as south of the rivers, a well-stocked yambarn gave a man a feeling of security and well-being. Even the best stocked grain bin was not proof against the effects of major droughts or locust invasions and when such disasters occurred wide areas of Nigerian society could be affected and shifts in foodstuffs from other areas to those worse hit would occur.<sup>2</sup> Cattle epidemics could have a similar effect on Fulani cattle-men and leave them at the mercy of sedentary communities.<sup>3</sup> Occurrences such as these could and did strip individuals and communities of their stored material wealth and could even result in the selling of members of their families into slavery. The history of Nigeria's 'traditional' economy was neither changeless nor uneventful.

Nor was production undiversified. Within each community there was considerable function specialization built upon the agricultural base. In many societies each household had its own line in food preparation which could be made available to others at a price. There were specialist craftsmen and others who would take up a particular craft

1. W.F. Stolper, *Planning Without Facts*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966. G.K. Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government, and Economic Growth in Nigeria*, London, 1966, p. 387.
2. Cf., Polly Hill *Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa*, Cambridge, 1970; Lander, *Records of Clapperton's Last Expedition*, London, 1830, volume 2, pp. 40-41.
3. Cf., "The rinderpest epidemic of 1897" in D.J. Stenning *Savannah Nomads*. Oxford, 1959, pp. 59 and 194-95.

in the farming off season. There were hunters and fishermen and those who devoted their whole energies to trade. All these were grist to the mill of the multitude of local periodical markets which covered practically the whole land although they were to be found in greater density in some areas than in others.<sup>4</sup> The frequency and heavy attendance at these markets led many foreign observers to remark on the commercial propensities of the peoples of Nigeria. The vast majority of the transactions at such gatherings were purely local but there was always a proportion of the commodities exposed for sale that came from distant parts. Few areas of Nigeria were truly self-sufficing. One particular necessity of life, namely salt, was only found in a few localities and much of it had to be imported from beyond Nigeria's present-day borders. A large part of Northern Nigeria was dependent for its salt on the mines of the Sahara. Saharan salt poured down along the trade routes to the Niger River and beyond. Shipped at Rabba in special bags, it arrived in vast quantities at Egga for distribution to the countries to the southward.<sup>5</sup> In the north-east a second supply came from the banks of Lake Chad and a third from salt workings at Awe in Adamawa.<sup>6</sup> These provided for some of the wants of the people in the basin of the Benue River. Below the confluence salt was supplied by specialists in salt evaporation along the coast, most notably the people on Nembe and the Itsekiri.<sup>7</sup> Another rare commodity for which there was a wide demand was the natron or potash cut in slabs on the northern edge of Lake Chad and carried by traders to almost every part of Nigeria. Strings of natron-bearing donkeys were to be seen on all the major routes in the North and one of the most frequented roads in the 19th century was that which swung from Kano southward to the Niger at Bussa where it met another major route from Borno along the Benue and thence to Yorubaland or west to Gonja in Ghana.<sup>8</sup> The donkeys that went to Ghana, or others that replaced them, came back above all with kola-nuts—the cheap variety that came from the prolific trees in that region.<sup>9</sup> Kolanuts were also a commodity of local production and widespread consumption. Only a proportion were imported. The more expensive varieties were produced across the forest belt from near the sea to as far north as Nupe and the banks of the Benue. They were an important article of northward trade while the most important exchange product coming south, apart from salt and natron, was cattle. Cattle and cattle-products were items of exchange over a very wide area of the country since most were

4. U.I. Ukwu, "The Development of Trade and Marketing in Iboland", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1967.
5. J.F.A. Ajayi (ed.), *The Journal of S.A. Crowther and J.F. Schon . . . 1841 Niger Expedition*, London, Cass reprint, 1970.
6. F.M.H. Migeod, *Through Nigeria to Lake Chad*, London, 1924, page 184. M. Perham, (ed.), *Mining Commerce and Finance in Nigeria*, London, 1938, p. 4. Y.A. Ibrahim, "The Search for Leadership in a Nigerian Community: the Igbirra Tao". Ph.D. thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, 1968, p. 21. T.J. Hutchinson, *Narrative of the Niger, Tshadda and Binue Exploration 1855*, London, Cass reprint, 1966, p. 92.
7. E.J. Alagoa, *The Small Brave City State*, Ibadan, 1964. O. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, London, 1969, p. 58.
8. J. Goody and T.M. Mustafa, "The Caravan Trade from Kano to Salaga", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 111 (4), 1967; Migeod op. cit. pp. 83, 94, 144-145, 161.
9. Goody and Mustafa, op. cit.

in the possession of Fulani specialist herdsmen. Where and when the products of the cattle industry were injected into the economies of the sedentary peoples depended very much on economic, social and political circumstances. In some cases the correct between the two communities was a matter of the simple exchange of manure for grazing rights. In other cases Fulani communities who had settled down (and they had done so from the desert fringe to as far south as Egbado in the early 19th century) provided regular supplies of milk and meat to their neighbours.<sup>10</sup> In the case of Kano's meat trade southward, however, the cattle had entered the system of long-distance commercial exchange, either as tribute or in other ways, and were dispatched under the auspices of Hausa merchants.<sup>11</sup>

At a somewhat different level was the medium range commerce in manufactured and semi-manufactured products. In the wide area of Nigeria where cloth was the preferred form of personal apparel, people generally bought their everyday clothes from local weavers if they did not weave them themselves. But for festive occasions they were apt to seek their clothes from elsewhere. The fine and varied products of Kano and Sokoto were sold far and wide across the Western Sudan from Segou to Darfur and southward to Yorubaland and other countries south of the Niger.<sup>12</sup> The Igbirra and their neighbours sitting among some of the finest cotton-growing areas of Nigeria likewise exported to their less favoured neighbours across and further south along the Niger whose spinners and weavers had to make do with cotton from the bombax tree, mixed as often as not with grass. Even from the largest textile centres, traffic was seldom one way, for those who produced quality cloth were connoisseurs who often also had a taste for further variety.<sup>13</sup> Along the coast, the Ijo brought in their apparel from abroad and the wealthier men who could afford them had jackets replete with brass buttons and epaulettes, a colourful costume which long centuries of importation from Europe had practically rendered traditional.

Where cloth was not used, people adorned themselves rather with beads and bracelets, necklaces, anklets, bands and other ornaments of worked metal. It cannot be a matter for surprise that the societies that prized metal ornamentation more than cloth were the most prolific metal producers and workers. On entering a village on the Bauchi Plateau the first house the visitor met was that of the blacksmith and the looms and dye-pits of the towns to the north and to the south were replaced by forges and smelters.<sup>14</sup> Some of these villages produced cloth, strictly for export, but above all they produced iron in quantity and in a few cases, tin. The cloth wearing people of Borno looked southward to the metal producers of the Mandara mountains for their

10. D.M. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, London, 1967, p. xiii. Stenning, op. cit., p. 4; R. Hallett (ed.), *The Journals of Richard and John Lander*, London, 1965, p. 44.

11. A. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*, London, 1969, pp. 6-7.

12. H. Bindlors, *In the Niger Country*, London, 1898, p. 308, observed that Kano cloth was sold in southern Morocco and exported from Lagos. H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, (1857) London, Cass reprint, 1965, Vol. 1, pp. 510-12.

13. Crowther and Schon, op. cit., p. 353 referred to "enormous quantities" of cloth sent southward from the confluence districts as far as the west; Y.A. Ibrahim, op. cit., p. 27; Lander, op. cit. p. 250.

14. Raphael, op. cit., p. 249.



iron. There was an outward flow of iron from Bauchi to the surrounding areas.<sup>15</sup> Nupe acted as intermediary between the metal rich peoples to the northward and the peoples westward along the Niger and to the south of the river. From the peoples south of the Benue, iron in the form of hoe currency shifted off toward adjacent areas.<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that ore was not mined and smelted outside the areas mentioned. There were smelters all over the country and some of the finest and most intricate smithing work was done in the towns of Nupe, Hausaland and Yorubaland. It was rather a matter of metal being traded as a supplement to local production. The same may be said of mat-making which was more highly developed in some areas than in others, pottery, calabash-carving, leather-working, fishing and so on. Semi-specialization rather than outright geographical segregation of productive functions was the general rule in early 19th century Nigeria, although there were a few localized exceptions.

One form of trade which was more or less universal and which was in a certain sense *sui generis* was the trade in slaves. There were few Nigerian societies which did not have their slaves whether they were assigned to the service of shrines like the Igbo *Osu*, or simple domestic service or field labouring or women for the harems and personal households of the great. There was a widespread demand for mobile individuals untied by lineage and kinship who would be at the entire disposal of others. At the beginning of the 19th century most societies had some slaves while a few imperial centres were considerably better provided in this respect than the generality. Wherever slaves were traded they represented a high value and easily transportable commodity.<sup>17</sup> Slave trading was always big business and those who traded in slaves were usually involved in politics. The trade tended to be a long-distance one for the simple and obvious reason that a slave's value rose the further he was taken from his home. Slave trading was inevitably connected with war and some states such as Borno, Benin or the Oyo empire probably at times deliberately raided for slaves. Nevertheless there were no doubt sufficient convicted criminals and irredeemable bankrupts scattered throughout Nigerian society to provide a substantial proportion of the general exchange without recourse to war.<sup>18</sup>

Something has been said of Nigeria's external commerce. The great western route to Gonga was an old branch of Nigeria's commerce whose importance was rapidly increasing at the beginning of the 19th century. It was principally in Nigerian hands and during the 18th century the control of the trade had been shifting westward from Borno to Hausaland. At the beginning of the 19th century Kano was beginning to replace Katsina and Kebbi as the major entrepot but whichever city dominated the commerce the caravaners and the agents in the posts and stations stretching out to the

15. Migcod, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

16. M. Perham (ed.), *The Diaries of Lord Lugard*, Vol. IV, p. 171. By mid-century however, European iron bars were appearing as far north as the Benue. T.J. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

17. See J. Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa*, Oxford, 1971, chapter 3.

18. Cf., O. Ikime, *op. cit.*, pp. 51 and 53. A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, London, 1969.

trade's major terminus at Salaga and the trading community in Salaga itself were mainly Nigerians and the language of trade was Hausa. The same could not be said, however, of the other branches of Nigerian external commerce. The desert trade to North Africa and the seaward commerce to America and Europe were both controlled by foreigners by the early 19th century. Of the two, the North African trade was no doubt of greater importance to Nigeria up to 1850. Saharan salt and North African silk were found on markets well south of the Niger River. Arab merchants were a familiar sight in Rabba and Egga long before Europeans came so far inland. In Yauri in the 1830s Cairo was famous for the excellence of its manufactures while Europe was scarcely known.<sup>19</sup> The only European products that found their way so far north were muskets and beads. At this period Nigeria's overseas trade was inconsequential by comparison with the vast internal commerce. Seaborne traffic concerned only a string of semi-isolated small trading towns along the coast from Cameroon to the Forcados River which mainly traded in slaves with European merchants. The kingdom of Benin had lost much of the interest it had had in foreign trade by the beginning of the 19th century and of the inland states within Nigeria's present borders only Oyo at this time was sufficiently interested to maintain an elaborate trading system that skirted the forest and debouched on the coast between Porto Novo and Lagos.<sup>20</sup> The Saharan export like that by sea consisted mainly of slaves supplemented by a certain amount of ivory, leather goods and cloth. Northwards as well as southwards the long and dangerous voyages that had to be made to bring Nigeria's exports to their final consumers ensured that only articles of the highest intrinsic value were dealt in. Piracy, war and shipwrecks at sea, feuds between controllers of the land routes and the natural hazards of travel across semi-waterless deserts limited the development of Nigeria's external commerce in these directions.

There were limiting factors also that hampered the growth of Nigeria's internal trade. Vast distances had to be traversed to bring producers and consumers together particularly outside the more densely peopled areas of the forest and the Kano region. The wheel was unknown and goods had to be carried from place to place, and in war emergency armed caravans had to be used. But too much should not be made of such transportation difficulties. Nigeria was better endowed than practically any other part of Africa except Zaire or Guinea with natural means of communication. There was a mass of navigable waterway in the Niger Delta leading to the Imo River and the Niger itself. The Qua Ibo and Cross Rivers formed two other systems to the eastward. Lagoons stretched from the delta to Nigeria's western boundary and various rivers such as the Ogun were navigable over a good part of their courses at least during the wet season. Then there was the great Niger-Benue system trisecting the whole region with substantial affluents such as the Rima, the Kaduna, the Gongola, the Anambra as subsidiary axes for commerce. In the north-east the Yobe and the Yedseram provided further routes. These rivers were used extensively for the transport of bulky goods. Along the central portion of the Niger from Bussa to the confluence transport

19. Lander, *op. cit.*, pp. 191, 136.

20. A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, London, 1969, p. 230.

was mainly in the hands of the Kede people with their enormous thatched-over vessels better called barges than canoes.<sup>21</sup> Their two-ton capacity compared favourably with the modern three-ton lorry. It is perhaps unwise to compare the 1920 estimate of 3k a ton-mile for canoe freights with the present 5k a ton-mile allowed for lorry and rail shipment of produce in view of the various changes in prices and costs occurring in the interim.<sup>22</sup> Such comparisons beg a variety of difficult questions concerning the nature and development of the Nigerian economy. But at least it sets a *prima facie* case that the canoe was not incapable of attaining some of the achievements of modern transport in the field of bulk movement of goods. The cargoes of 19th century canoes consisted very largely of fairly bulky items. Yams were carried back in the great flotillas of vessels that came up from the delta with banners flying and cannon strapped to their bows to the markets of Aboh and Onitsha.<sup>23</sup> Onions grown on the *fadamas* (irrigated farms) above Yauri were being shipped in bulk to markets down river in the 1830's.<sup>24</sup> Corn was brought from areas of surplus to areas of shortage. Canoes moved up and down the river laden to the gunwales with salt. At the various river ports, vessels gathered in 'canoe parks' numbering a hundred or more and there was a regular passing and re-passing of vessels along practically every stretch of navigable waterway in the country.<sup>25</sup>

On land the favoured means of transport north of the Niger and Benue was the pack animal—camels, oxen and, above all, the donkey. Specialist donkey breeders on the farms south of Kano raised beasts for the merchants of that city who sent them off in caravans thousands strong carrying natron and salt to Ghana and the south.<sup>26</sup> This could be described as 'main line' traffic. Donkeys in smaller groups plodded routes all over the north and stretched on southward beyond the Niger River as far as the Oyo empire.<sup>27</sup> The pack animal is not to be despised as a means of getting goods from place to place. While donkeys were carrying all manner of goods across northern Nigeria, pack horses were transporting iron across the English Pennines to the centres of the incipient 'industrial revolution'.<sup>28</sup> Donkeys and oxen carried goods at

21. Lander, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

22. *U.K. Parliamentary Papers, 1920, Cd. 468/83, appendix 7.*

22. Lander, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-36.

24. Lander, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

25. The ruler of the Kede people on the middle Niger in 1830 was reputed to own six hundred canoes. Lander, *op. cit.*, p. 197. See also R.S. Smith, "The Canoe in West African History", *Journal of African History*, vol. 11, No. XI (4), 1970, p. 515.

25. The ruler of the Kede people on the middle Niger in 1830 was reputed to own six hundred canoes. Lander, *op. cit.*, p. 197. See also R.S. Smith, "The Canoe in West African History", *Journal of African History*, vol. 11, no. XI (4), 1970, p. 515.

26. Indebtedness for information regarding this goes to Yusuf Usman and Paul Lovejoy whose forthcoming theses on Katsina and the Kolanut trade respectively will provide much further light here.

27. Lander, *op. cit.*

28. See T.S. Ashton, *An 18th Century Industrialist: Peter study of Warrington 1756-1806*. Manchester, 1939. C.f. also, the observation in Laird and Oldfield, p. 165 that there was twice as much traffic on the Niger as on the upper Rhine.

approximately double the rate per ton-mile for canoe transport. Head-loading was twice as costly again and head-loading was the sole means of transport in tse-tse fly affected areas away from navigable rivers. Head-loading of farm produce was only feasible where comparatively short hauls were required.<sup>29</sup> Otherwise carriers were used where speed and flexibility of movement counted and where the goods were light and of high value. For the conveyance of messages nothing could surpass the professional runner and rulers retained men for this purpose. In the late 19th century a reputed runner carried a message from the Emir of Gombé over four hundred miles to the Sultan of Sokoto in eight days—a feat that can stand comparison with present-day telegrams!<sup>30</sup>

Technology probably represented a less serious curb on the exchange of merchandise than tools and other exactions on trade, the periodical closure of routes by wars and other disturbances and the barriers set to free movement of men and goods by fragmented political organization most especially among segmentary societies. Lander commented of the route from Badagry to Old Oyo in 1830 that there were as many turnpikes on it as on a contemporary English road.<sup>31</sup> One may assume that the tolls at each check point were higher and the authorities evidently made fewer improvements to the surface than did the English turnpike trusts. Even allowing for the fact that he appeared in the guise of a rich stranger Lander had to pay enormous sums simply for the privilege of free movement along what was at the time a well-policed and well-travelled route.<sup>32</sup> On the Niger River there were similar restrictions on movement. Igbo canoes could not go north of Iddah. Iddah canoes could not go south of Aboh. From Egga to Bussa the river lay in Nupe territory and that was where Nupe vessels operated. Even within those stretches the canoe operator could not be sure of his security. He was subject to attack by other canoes and if he went ashore at an unwanted spot he was liable to attack by the riverain peoples. The fate of the caravan operator and long-distance carrier was little different. They too had to keep a weather eye on changes in the political climate in the regions through which they passed and stand prepared for attack by robbers, switches in the route to avoid war-torn areas, and confiscation by local political authorities.<sup>33</sup>

The existence of different culture areas in the country can be regarded as both evidence of and a reason for economic discontinuities in early 19th century Nigeria. Nigeria did not represent one market with a single set of production and consumption norms. Ignoring local discontinuities, there were a number of broad though overlapping economic divisions in the country. Between north and south there was a difference in food consumption patterns—between those depending on essentially a grain diet and those for whom root crops were the staple food. Secondly and more important was the division between the clothes-wearing and the ornament-wearing

29. *U.K. Parliamentary Papers*, 1920 Cd. 468/83 appendix 7.

30. A.C.G. Hastings, *Nigerian Days*, Edinburgh, 1925, p. 153. In 1913 mail runners regularly carried 40lb. mail bags from Zungeru to Sokoto in eleven days, Rapheal, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

31. Lander, *op. cit.*, pp. 59, 69 and 70.

32. Lander, *op. cit.*, p. 301. Lander was provided with N512 worth of presents.

33. Lander (*op. cit.*, p. 77) in 1833 found Kano merchants using a new route to Gonga the old one having become unsafe.

peoples. While exchanges could take place between the two one could not be wholly absorbed into the economy of the other because of a fundamental difference in tastes. The distinction was reinforced by the difference in currency systems. East of the Niger, and along a great part of the Benue, cowries were not the acceptable currency that they were over the greater part of the rest of Nigeria. Iron bars, manillas, hoes and other metal items were the measures of exchange.<sup>34</sup> Discontinuities in consumption patterns of this kind set limits to the growth of markets and product specialization. They implied the existence of different cultural worlds and as the metal ornamented groups were interspersed with cloth consumers, natural lines of communication were broken at a multitude of points. Among cloth consumers too there was a considerable range of different tastes in cloth which reduced the area of exchange. The Yoruba of Oyo and Egba clothed themselves in blue. Those among the neighbouring Bariba preferred brighter colours.<sup>35</sup> At Onitsha the predominant cloth was white, among the Igbirra variegated cloth was worn.<sup>36</sup> In Hausaland and in Borno people's preferences again differed. And so across the whole range of crafts, in sculpture, smithing, raffia work and pottery, most particularly the first two, people's tastes were closely bound up with the customs of their own local cultural heritage and a broad interchange of such articles across cultural barriers was hardly to be expected. Craftsmen who produced for export were usually working at the margin of the market in other cultures than their own and had to contend with rapid saturation of such markets and a general volatility of demand.<sup>37</sup>

"The most important single event still largely determining the socio-political structure, settlement pattern and ethnic composition of the population was the establishment and expansion of Abeokuta as a war refugee town in the first half of the 19th century". Thus the I.L.O. working party in 1969 prefaced their study of socio-economic conditions of the Ifo, Otta and Ilaro districts of the former Western State of Nigeria.<sup>38</sup> For how many other parts of Nigeria is it not true that present-day structures are largely the product of forces at work during that early 19th century period? It is certainly the case with Yorubaland. It was at that time that the semi-savannah areas of the upper Ogun river area formerly well-populated, were evacuated and they are only being re-occupied now. The whole centre of gravity of the Yoruba populations fell down southward into the forest with an ecology which must have been new to the experience of many of the migrants. This movement implied a considerable alteration in the form if not the total volume of production. Accompanied as it was by extensive internecine warfare, the breaking of a large number of towns and a substantial increase in the export slave trade one may assume that the fall in total

34. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "The Major Currencies in Nigeria History", *J.H.S.N.*, Vol. 2 No. 1, Dec. 1960, pp. 123-50.

35. Lander, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 107, 118, 163.

36. S. Crowther and J.C. Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger*, 1859, Dowsons reprint, 1968, p. 30.

37. E.g., Lander found in 1833 that the markets around Bussa were still saturated with the needles sold there on his previous visit in 1827, *op. cit.*, 129.

38. International Labour Organization, "Report on a Study of Ifo, Otta, and Ilaro Districts of the Western State of Nigeria", Mimeo.



production was substantial. The destruction of huge quantities of capital in the form of buildings, markets, commercial connections and farms in addition to the sudden heavy drainage of manpower must have had a most serious effect on the general level of prosperity. In 1841 Samuel Crowther, accompanying the Niger expedition of that year heard distant reports of his homeland and recorded a list of the principal towns Ago (Oyo), Kishi, Ibadan, Iseyin, Shaki, Igboho, Ijaye, Iwo, Ede, Oshogbo, Illa, Awaye Washimi, Ilorin and Abeokuta.<sup>39</sup> The list more or less corresponds to that of Yorubaland west of Ijesha-Ekiti and north of Ijebu as it stands today and about half of those listed were of recent creation. Urban settlements were not new among the Yoruba but the particular pattern of urban settlement that this list represented cramped in toward the forest from the savannah land to the north and the west was. Where the great route from Old Oyo to the coast had once lain was about to become a no-man's land between Dahomey and Abeokuta.<sup>40</sup> The Niger and the great east-west trade route through Bussa now lay far distant from the main new line of economic activity apart from Ilorin and the less important towns of Kishi and Shaki.

Meanwhile a similar process was underway in the north. Some of the great old Hausa cities survived and prospered through the jihad, Kano most notably and Zaria and Katsina. Others like Daura and Gobir suffered considerably as did the cities of the Kebbawa.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand entirely new cities came up, grew and prospered. The most notable of course was the imperial capital at Sokoto which steadily developed from the time of its foundation and threw out subsidiary farming settlements around the arc of the Rima River many of them inhabited by the slaves that constantly poured in from distant parts as tribute.<sup>42</sup> Another new city that arose was Bauchi and on the upper Benue the Fulani of Adamawa created a series of tightly built urban settlements with surrounding farms where none had been before.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the most spectacular building and rebuilding occurred in Nupe where Rabba rose from small beginnings to a large city until its destruction in 1842. Then Bida took over in 1857 and within ten years a war camp had become a fixed capital with mosques, markets, fine streets, ten miles of war and slave settlements all round feeding urban life.<sup>44</sup>

While these events were taking place, an important shift occurred in the locus and pattern of trade throughout the north. Borno had still been, at the end of the 18th century, the most important trading centre in the north of Nigeria although Katsina was gradually overtaking it. The distribution of Kiswa myths of origin on the Benue and westward to Bussa and Ghana is but part of the remaining evidence of Borno's

39. Crowther and Schon, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

40. K. Folayan, "Egbado to 1832: the Birth of a Dilemma," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, IV (1), pp. 27-28.

41. M.B. Alkali, "A Hausa Community in Crisis: Kebbi in the 19th Century", Ph.D., A.B.U., 1969, pp. 143, 178.

42. Muhammad Bello was an enthusiastic builder of walled towns, Last, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

43. A. Abubakar, "The Establishment of an Emirate Form of Government in Fombian", Ph.D. thesis Ahmadu Bello University, 1969.

44. M. Masson, "A Political History of Nupe", Ph.D. thesis University of Birmingham, 1970.

former cultural hegemony and trading activity along that line.<sup>45</sup> By the 19th century that line that had been broken and Borno itself was in a state of economic decline characterized by what appears to have been a chronic inability to maintain its customary medium of exchange with other states.<sup>46</sup> The waning of the trans-Saharan slave trade in the course of the 19th century struck another blow at Borno's prosperity and ensured its inability to recover its former greatness. In any case Borno was being hopelessly outstripped by the growing commercial power of Kano whose fortunes were hitched to the dynamic forces of the age while Borno's were linked with those that were in decline. The Sokoto Caliphate was an economic as well as a political entity or at least its political institutions had the most important economic results. One of the things that the Caliph required of those who bore his flags was that they should keep open the roads throughout their dominions and much effort was expended by all of them in securing this object.<sup>47</sup> In particular, attention was paid to maintaining the routes between the several parts of the Caliphate and Sokoto itself. All this redounded to the benefit of an established trading city like Kano with its strong economic base in the settled districts, and its strategic position in regard to older trade routes. Katsina could equally have benefited but it stood out longer against the forces of the jihad and hence its merchants lost the opportunity which Kano grasped of becoming brokers to the whole jihad movement. While the notables and soldiers of growing jihadist states gathered in slaves, Hausa merchants, many of them from Kano or clients and agents of Kano business houses, turned the booty to financial account. They brought slaves from one point of the Caliphate to another, sharing in the gains attendant on such operations. They were well-equipped to convert the static wealth of communities who had been drawn into tributary relationship to the emirates at the periphery into mobile resources for taxation purposes. Transfers of this kind, and the movement of slaves in particular, represented very big business and participation in it generated capital and created commercial nexuses which could be turned to account in other branches of trade. The jihad and the growth of the Sokoto Caliphate created new commercial wealth and redirected the channels of trade on a wide scale bringing cities and towns from Kano to Ilorin and from Gwandu to Adamawa into a single economic system whose administrative centre was Sokoto and whose commercial centre was Kano. It created a leisured class of judges, administrators and officials who had the means and the taste to create a market for high quality manufactures. It developed

45. See Barth, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 117 for the view that until the jihad Katsina was the principal trading centre and Kano of small account. Goody and Musfata, *op. cit.*, mention that the early settlers, from Nigeria in Salaga were described as Beriberi who were replaced by Hausa.
46. Migeod, *op. cit.*, p. 151; A. Schultze (tr. Benton), *The Sultanate of Bornu*. (London, 1913), pp. 211 and 216; Mr J.E. Lavers informs me that by contrast with the 19th century, earlier sources speak of the trans-Saharan trade as "Bornuese" indicating that the capital and the merchants came from Borno; cf., Cohen, *op. cit.*, for the conclusion that long distances trades of their nature tended to become uni-ethnic.
47. See Mason, *op. cit.*, see Adeleye, *op. cit.*, p. 96 for Caliph's power also to close routes against enemies.

political and administrative structures which were conducive to the ordered growth of long and short-distance commercial exchange. Borno was left out on a limbo, its trans-Saharan commerce, a money multiplier of diminishing dimensions, compared with the internal transfers occasioned by the growth of jihadist states. Rabhi's incursion completed the process of decline and in the 20th century the Borno cattle trade was financed and run from Kano—a good indication of the extent to which Borno had fallen under the hegemony of the Kano commercial nexus.<sup>48</sup>

There is every indication that during the 19th century war was carried on in Nigeria on a much vaster scale than hitherto and war was a constant factor in the history of the period. Once the political equilibrium had been unhinged by the creation of the Sokoto superstate and the collapse of the Oyo empire, war was inevitable and was likely to continue until some new equilibrium was found. Whatever the state of affairs within each political system, the international system was out of gear and throughout the 19th century the advocates of balance and stability fought a losing battle with those who sought the indefinite expansion of the power and wealth of the groups to which they belonged.<sup>49</sup> Political history tends to speak of wars rather than war. An impression is often conveyed of a series of neat trials of strength followed by periods of peace. But large-scale wars are never neat wherever they are fought, the pitched battle is a rarity and most of the time is spent in mobilizing, demobilizing and re-mobilizing the forces of combat. The forces of combat consisted of men and great as efforts of organization by 19th century states were in mustering tens of thousands of soldiers for battle, one must not suppose that the soldiers were automata or that their fighting qualities could be switched on and off at will by the generals in command. A Nupe war camp of the early 1880s was described as assuming the form of a triangle with on one flank men from Adamawa and on the other men from the banks of the Niger from Lokoja to Rabba which at the angles mounted Hausa. At the centre were to be found the men from Bida itself with the Etsu Nupe, his aides and staff officers. The fighting men had come from far and wide to join in the battle against a group of hill villages and after victory they dispersed, each with his share of the booty, to their several distant homes.<sup>50</sup> The high command merely set out the broad objectives; the rest was left to the private enterprise of individuals and groups who swarmed to and from the battlefield like a cloud of devouring locusts. The Nupe armies were perhaps more heterogenous than most but the armies of most great states had a composite character and, while not disregarding the important role the states themselves played as so many focuses of authority and power, it is nevertheless possible to see the soldiery as an autonomous social force of the greatest significance for 19th century Nigerian history.

48. See Cohen, *op. cit.* Also Northern Nigeria Provincial Reports 1938, p. 20, on the crisis produced in the Borno cattle trade when the Kano buyers arrived later.

49. Cf., Mason, *op. cit.*, on the Caliph's mid-century intervention on behalf of the 'royals' against Umar, the commander of the military; B.A. Awe, 'The Rise of Ibadan as a Military Power 1851-93' D. Phil. Oxford., 1964, p. 20 on the efforts of Balogun Ibikunle to maintain peace in the 1850s; S.A. Abubakar, *op. cit.*, see also, C.M.S. CA2/0496 Hinderer's half-early report 1/4/59.

50. Viard, *op. cit.*, p. 211 ff.

Whatever international considerations guided the diplomacy of 19th century states, practically all had to contend with the social pressures generated by the masses of professional and semi-professional warriors who, in one way or another, had cast off the conventions of traditional society and in many cases the constraints of a farming life.<sup>51</sup> Such men were apt to be driven by insatiable ambition.<sup>52</sup> The leaders were driven to compete in prestige with one another; those who followed, demanded new opportunities to show their prowess, amass slaves and wealth, and build new houses of their own. They created a competitive atmosphere such that statesmen charged with the control of states hardly dared eschew expansion or remain quiescent. To do so was to invite intrigue at the centre or separation at the periphery by those who were prepared to give the soldiery their lead.<sup>53</sup> Quiescence was also bad policy in that it left the soldiers in home districts battering on the population, kidnapping in the villages and thieving in the markets, or it could mean their engaging in private forays of their own on the frontiers.<sup>54</sup> Vis-à-vis their segmented neighbours, the great states of the 19th century assumed the guise of vast overbearing monoliths, but on closer inspection the governments of most of such states can be seen to have been struggling to avoid being engulfed by the virtually uncontrollable forces piling up within society and spilling over in a multitude of different directions.

Nowhere was this competitive social atmosphere more intense than at the centres of the great states. While some of the booty of war was dispersed immediately after a battle, the lion's share was conveyed back to the capital and when the slaves, cattle and goods came in, fortunes could, as it were, be made overnight. Markets were suddenly glutted with slaves and enterprising master craftsmen could buy apprentices and labourers at low prices; clients, praise-singers and courtiers could expect gifts from their patrons; farmers whether slave or free who had amassed a little wealth could buy a labourer or two and take the first step on the ladder to wealth and prestige.<sup>55</sup> Upward ascent in the cosmopolitan cities could be rapid. Wealthy houses with slaves and plantations could surge up as fast as the cities themselves such as the city of Bida, a rough encampment in 1857, a fully-built city of some 100,000 inhabitants with ten miles of wall, roads, markets, mosques and palace just eleven years later.<sup>56</sup> But the way down could be just as fast like the meteoric fall and eradication of Ijaye in 1860,<sup>57</sup> like the fate of the royal families in Nupe who lost out in the civil wars of the 1850s.

51. C.M.S. Records CA2/0496, Hinderer's Journal: Entry for 1 April 1859; S.A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland 1840-1893*, London, 1971, pp. 39-41 and 68; Mason, op. cit., p. 449, f.1.

52. C.f. Johnson's description of Latosisa in *History of the Yorubas*, 1921 p. 391.

53. C.f. Akintoye, op. cit., p. 177 (the case of Kara of Ilorin); see also Abubakar, op. cit., on the role of the Fombina sub-emirates.

54. Crowther and Taylor, op. cit., passim, especially pp. 126, 127, 133, 162 and 196-7; C.M.S. Records, Hinderers to Venn, 20 July 1855.

55. C.M.S. Records; Hinderer to Strath, 1 October 1855.

56. C.M.S. Records; Hinderer to Strath, 1 October 1855.

57. Mason, op. cit., pp. 430-32 and 434 ff.

58. See J.F.A. Ajayi and R.S. Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century*, Cambridge, 1964, p. 110.



and were reduced to pawning their children and petty trading to avoid entire bankruptcy.<sup>58</sup> Civil wars and the twists of politics could produce drastic reversals of fortunes, but so could natural catastrophes, local failure of crops, a series of deaths of heads of houses and the burial expenses this entailed, the vagaries of commerce, the fortunes of slaving wars, or being awkwardly caught by the sudden mid-century price inflation in cowry-using areas.<sup>59</sup> Any or a combination of these could send a family or a man spiralling downward, in a welter of slave-selling and pawning through a society that applauded success but was intolerant of failure.

Cruel as it could be, 19th century city society was also exceptionally dynamic, assertive and attractive to many of those who lived along its fringe. The well-dressed horseman who rode out from Bauchi or Yola or Bida held his head high as he passed the slave farmers in the field. He and his foot-soldiers still held their heads high as they approached stockaded pagan villages and even a forcible rebuff diminished not a whit their indomitable air of superiority. The messengers of the great, and those who posed as such, went out of cities further south with an equal self-assurance and plundered without compunction in the markets of tributary towns. Those who stood outside the circle were hustled back to hill-tops, driven out to islands on the rivers, stripped of their stored grain, their clothes, their farm implements. Whatever the varying fortunes of the different great states as individual entities, the frontiers of their influence and control moved steadily outward and onward. If one faltered, another more efficient took its place, and thus the ideology of the expanding city culture was keyed up to a higher pitch. Eventually the other societies which could not escape or which had no natural barriers to protect them, were squeezed toward fusion, toward the adoption of the ideology of city on their own account as was the case with the Ekitis at Oke Mesi<sup>60</sup> or toward the creation of subsidiary cooperating centres in association with the imperial power as with Auchi or Semolika in Afenmai. And with this went the spread of the social and economic characteristics of the system, rapid transfers of wealth, the widening of social inequalities in terms of material wealth (though these did not necessarily have a permanent character), and, on the positive side, a growing market for the higher quality products of city craftsmen and increasing economic integration on a broader geographical scale.<sup>61</sup>

By the end of the century few parts of the country were left untouched by the tentacles of this growing social system. The area of each state's regular administrative control may not have been very extensive—perhaps little more than a day's journey from the city walls in most cases. But the boundaries of administrative control should not be confused with the boundaries of military, economic and cultural influence.

58. Crowther and Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

59. *C.M.S. Records*, Hinderer to Venn, 20 July 1855 speaks of the everyday tale of poor people getting into debt and having to pawn their families; A.G. Hopkins, "The Currency Revolution in South West Nigeria in the late 19th Century", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, III (3), p. 471, ff.

60. See Akintoye, chapter 5.

61. C.f., Mason, *op. cit.*, final chapter; Landerer's and others description of the clothing of the different classes in the cities makes it clear that in those cities the richness of dress was the main outward sign of status; see especially Lander, *Clapperton's Expedition*, p. 213.



Although related to the political expansion of states, the dissemination of new social and cultural attitudes transcended political frontiers. A community might stand angrily aloof from the caravan route stringing through the plain in fifteen-mile stages from encampment to encampment, but some among them would be involved, selling goods, acting as carriers or as escorts and if they chanced to profit would tend to become drawn in. Given the volume and value of the city centred exchanges they affected the economy of vast regions and the shifting direction of raiding incursions imposed their own rhythms leaving some communities recovering from devastation, others preparing to meet assault, others again seeking to avert future blows by the payment of tribute. One large block of territory which remained more or less immune was that demarcated by the Benue and lower Niger and the mountains of Cameroon. Nupe, Nassarawa, Lafia and Muri made only brief incursions across the rivers and the offshoots from Adamawa swept down toward the sea along the Cameroonian flank leaving the mass of the Tiv, Idoma, Igala and Igbo peoples untouched.

The Igbo however, together with the Ijo, Urhobo, Itsekiri and southern Yoruba peoples, were affected by a different type of dynamic — that emanating from the coast. There, the major influence was the growth of foreign commerce and the crucial period was the first-half of the 19th century. During that period the slave trade from the delta and from Lagos experienced a last great expansion before it was throttled in the 1840s and 1850s by the operations of the British anti-slave trade squadron.<sup>62</sup> The same fifty years saw the rapid expansion of the new trade in palm oil which reached its apogee around 1855 when demand in Europe reached a peak. Thereafter the oil export volume remained more or less constant while prices fell.<sup>63</sup> During the first-half of the century the trading states of the Niger Delta grew rapidly and new canoe houses were formed as satellites of old to handle the movement of slaves and the food to feed them and even handle the bulkier palm oil that followed.<sup>64</sup> European influence lay with ever-increasing weight upon the city states' trade and politics. The channelling of credit to chosen selling organizations imposed a particular pattern on trading structures, encouraged the growth of the larger houses and helped ensure the speedy demise of those that could not compete. By the 1850s incessant naval intervention, bombardments and threats had broken down the controlling political agencies that could produce solidarity among African traders in the face of European merchants and the overall political control of the export trade was passing into the hands of European-dominated "Courts of Equity".<sup>65</sup> At the same time the African trading houses of the ports, flush with European credits, were leaning more heavily upon the market systems of Ibibio country, southern Ibo and Urhobo. Agents of the coastal houses resided in hinterland markets bulking oil and working with associates from among the local population who, in turn, accorded credits in exchange for securities in the form of pawns.<sup>66</sup> Wherever rivers provided a highway for the canoe men to

62. See, P. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A census*, Wisconsin, 1969, chapter 8.

63. C.W. Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers*, Oxford, 1961, p. 60.

64. G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, London, 1963, p. 159 and passim.

65. See K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*, Oxford, 1956.

66. O. Ikime, op. cit., pp. 67-72 and 86.

deploy their forces and evacuate the oil—on the Cross and Qua Ibo Rivers, the Imo, the Sombreiro, the Forcados and the Benin—the men from the coast could move on beyond the creeks and by their ability to lend, outdo other buyers in the markets. By the 1860s the coastal houses were moving inland from the creeks, from Bonny to Opobo, from Elem Kalabari to Abonnema and Buguma to keep a closer eye on the hinterland markets, while the steamers and hulks of the European merchants followed them up and shifted the centre of gravity of the system a good distance inland.<sup>67</sup> In the 1870s the market system of Igboland was assailed from another quarter as European trading with steamers began on a substantial scale along the River Niger.<sup>68</sup> Once more credits were issued, injecting new capital into existing market mechanisms, fostering commercial growth at nodal points such as Aboh, differentiating between the credit worthy with available gages for security and those left with the less profitable petty trade.

To the westward the course of development was in some ways similar. There too slave trade and palm oil trade grew together in the first half of the century leading to the growth of important trading organizations and of Lagos town itself. There too overall Nigerian political control was broken by the bombardment of 1851 and Kosoko's downfall. The Consul, and after 1861, the Governor, held the ring and enforced debt collection while different Nigerian trading groups competed for the opportunity for exporting through the European merchant houses.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand the attempt by European merchants to move inland in the 1850s came to naught; they were pushed back from Abeokuta by the political authorities there.<sup>70</sup> Ijebu and Egbas retained control of their commercial systems up to 1892. The European merchants' sphere of action ended at the limits of the Colony, beyond that the rhythm of trade corresponded mainly to the changing requirements of the various states beyond the lagoons. Nevertheless the large European demand for oil created a new trade flow in the west as in the east, most intense in the neighbourhood of the lagoons but with ramifications reaching out beyond Ilesha.<sup>71</sup> Part, no doubt, represented a diversion from the internal market for oil but most must have represented additional production. The articles imported in return were almost entirely consumer goods but included some items of considerable local significance such as firearms which had their effect on the political balance of power and cowries and other forms of currency which produced considerable price inflation in Yorubaland and beyond.

The colonial regime was imposed upon a Nigerian economy which was as yet only marginally involved in the European-dominated system of world trade. The character of imports indicates that by 1900, even for Nigeria south of and along the Rivers Niger and Benue where the export-import trade was most active, external commerce was still

67. G.I. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

68. See J.E. Flint, *George Goldie and the making of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1961.

69. See J.E. Flint, *George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1961.

69. See, R.S. Smith "To the Palavas Islands", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, V (1), p. 3.

70. S.O. Biobaku, *The Egbas and their Neighbours 1842-1872*, Oxford, 1975.

71. Akintoye, *op. cit.*, p. 201-202.

largely inessential to the daily life of the people at large. Substantial imports of stock-fish were yet to begin. Gin with other spirits which figured so largely on the import schedule was a luxury commodity which competed only to a limited extent with local industry and its import was reduced almost to vanishing point during the First World War without any notable dislocation taking place.<sup>72</sup> Much of the imported cloth consisted of the more expensive materials used on festive occasions while homespun garments were used for daily wear. Imported iron and other metals had become an important input for metal working industries south of the rivers but those industries themselves continued to flourish for some time after 1900 and Nigeria was not yet heavily dependent on Europe for haberdashery and other manufactured metal items. The only communities heavily dependent on imported goods were the coastal ports and their immediate hinterlands where articles of European manufacture were to be found in quantity entering into the everyday life of society.

One of the most immediate effects of the establishment of colonial rule in the period 1893 to 1913 was that most of the obstacles to the free flow of trade throughout the country were swept away.<sup>73</sup> Freedom of movement was made mandatory and military patrols ensured that it became effective. On the Bauchi Plateau, for example, Hausa caravans were able to move with far greater freedom through areas where formerly there had been strong resistance to their activity.<sup>74</sup> Until the railway was built European traders and the government saw commercial development in the North in terms of more freely moving Nigerian traders bringing increasing quantities of merchandise to the European firms' trading depots on the rivers.<sup>75</sup> On the rivers themselves the old trading arrangements whereby certain sections of the river were reserved to the boatmen of certain ports were broken down and canoe traffic became further ranging and more efficient. War materials were turned to peaceful traffic and on river, as on land, the first phase of colonial rule brought more rather than less Nigerian commercial activity, albeit in the form of supply to and distribution from a few European dominated depots. In the South however this was less clearly the case for the firmly established European businesses with their powerful capital backing were in a better position to exploit the new opportunities. They began to encroach along the lines of commercial communication between producers and final consumers by establishing branches closer to the areas of supply of palm oil and kernels and by retailing European goods in some of the larger Nigerian inland markets. This was particularly so in the West. In the East, European merchants were slower to move inland, partly because the establishment of colonial rule itself came later. But the process of commercial divide and rule progressed and men from houses that had once shared trade as partners with European firms now slipped into the position of mere agents buying and selling on behalf of European principals and according to the latter's general instructions.

72. See, A. McPhee, *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa*, London, 1926.

73. *Ibid.*

74. M. Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, London, 1937.

75. J.R. Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, London, 1914, pp. 227, 244 and 247.

76. *Royal Niger Company Records, Report of Ordinary General Meeting for 1903.*

One of the major obstacles to internal freedom of trade had been the periodic occurrence of wars and there is every reason to believe that immediately prior to the establishment of colonial rule warfare had become more intense and general over the greater part of the country. The first effect of colonial rule was to bring wars to an end. The colonial government arrogated to itself the absolute monopoly of the use of violence. Indeed it was in this area that the colonial regime achieved (if such can be called an achievement) the most dramatic increase in productivity. A platoon of WAFF soldiers could deal more destruction than a thousand or more archers or musketmen; a squad of police with rifles were more formidable than a large raiding force of horse and foot soldiers. Instead of the massive armies many of them tens of thousands strong, which provided defence and internal security for the various emirates and the states in the South, Nigeria was left simply with the men of the WAFF and police to maintain law and order.<sup>77</sup> What happened to all the others? Where did the displaced soldiers and warboys go? These are questions worth pondering on since a very large amount of what was no doubt Nigeria's finest manpower was involved.<sup>78</sup> A clue to the subsequent employment of some can be found in Akinyele's history of Ibadan.<sup>79</sup> Akinyele asserts that in the early twentieth century, the hunters at Ibadan rose to positions of wealth and prominence by buying or otherwise acquiring the empty lands on the war-torn frontier between Ibadan and its southern enemies, Abeokuta and Ijebu. In war conditions hunters were the spies and scouts of the army and like George Washington such men were especially well equipped to survey and secure land on the frontier once peace came. It is perhaps no coincidence that cocoa cultivation, a business requiring substantial initial investments in terms of labour, began in Ibadan Province precisely in those recently reclaimed southern areas.<sup>80</sup> One might ask too who were the thousands of labourers who built the railway from Lagos northward and who were the men who organized the gangs of workmen on a contract basis? They were 'war chiefs' who could command the services of those who had previously followed them as warboys or worked on their plantations and farms.<sup>81</sup> Labour was clearly in surfeit in Yorubaland at the end of the Kiriji wars. Some 13,000 labourers went off to work on the construction of the Ghana railways. Two to three thousand more were recruited into the Force Publique in Leopold's Congo.<sup>82</sup> Others helped build the railways there.<sup>83</sup> The cocoa industry was established, the palm oil and kernels trade was expanded and, south of Akure men went off to the bush in

77. There were 1,052 police in the South and 690 excluding Dogarai in the North in 1906, T.N. Tamuno *The Police in Modern Nigeria*, Ibadan, 1971: The strength of the army in 1900 was 2,600. Haywood and Clark. *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force*, Aldershot, 1964, p. 34.

78. The men concerned were not merely dry season soldiers. Mason, op. cit., p. 238.

79. Akinyele, *History of Ibadan*, 1946, p. 88-95.

80. See Adewujon, "Farming and Farmlands in Ibadan Division", Ph.D., University of Ibadan, 1963.

81. See Wale Oyemakinde, "A History of indigenous labour on the Nigeria Railway, 1893-1945", Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan, May, 1970.

82. Ceulemans. *La Force Publique au Congo Belge*, Brussels, 1960.

83. S.J. Cookey, "West African Immigrants in the Congo 1885-1896", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, III (2), p. 261.



thousands to collect rubber. Had there not been such opportunities the demobilization would not have passed off as quietly as it did and it is perhaps significant that there was more talk of brigandage in north-east Yorubaland with Ogedengbe as the central figure, than elsewhere. Looked at another way, the release of manpower at the end of the Kiriji wars was one of the conditions which made McPhee's "commercial revolution in British West Africa" and the beginning of structural change in the economy of both southwest Nigeria and Ghana possible.

The social and economic effects of the coming of peace elsewhere in Nigeria is more difficult to trace. Over a wide area of central Nigeria there was a gradual abandonment of hill sites and a movement toward more fertile lands in the plains.<sup>84</sup> Areas such as the Kano-Katsina border which had long been subject to raiding forays were steadily reoccupied with consequent effects upon the volume of production. Increased long-distance movement of merchandise expanded the demand for carriers.<sup>85</sup> The construction of the lines from Baro and Jebba to Minna and Kano and the Bauchi light railway called for the mobilization of labour on a substantial scale as did the growth of the tin mining industry which became particularly active after 1909. In the North however the new demand for labour was fairly localized. Up to the First World War activity was largely confined to the triangle whose points were Jebba on the Niger, Kano to the North and Lokoja on the Benue where the carrier route from the minesfield had its terminus. Labourers for railway building and for the tin mines were drawn largely from within that area and from the Bauchi emirate just beyond, while clerks and mechanics tramped up the road from the far south. In the area between the Benue and the sea where pre-colonial military activity had not been organized on so massive and professional a scale there was less demobilization and by contrast with the sharp quick battles elsewhere the war of British invasion dragged on longer as the invading forces were met with more persistent though localized resistance. Despite the economic disruption this periodically caused, there was a growing export of palm kernels and palm oil from the East as from the West in the period up to the First World War.

Between 1895 and 1912 the first phase of Nigerian railway construction was undertaken with the laying of the line from Lagos to the Niger and from the Niger to Kano. The appearance of the iron road was perhaps in the first instance more dramatic as a sign of changing times than effective in economic terms since even in 1911 60 percent of the produce shipped from Lagos was still canoe borne to the port down the lagoon compared with 40 percent brought in by rail. Rail freight rates at a (10k)-per mile in 1920 were 50 percent below the figure for headloading but were higher than those for canoes.<sup>86</sup> The railway made its impact away from the navigable rivers and its importance grew the further it stretched beyond the range of other forms of cheap transportation. The effect of its arrival in the close settled zone of Kano in

84. K.M. Buchanan and J.C. Pugh, *Land and People in Nigeria*, London, 1955. pp. 61-62; Hermon Hodge, *Up Against it in Nigeria*, London, 1922, p. 53.

85. U.K. *Parliamentary Papers*, Col. 468, appendix 7; Hausa carriers, camp followers and labourers found their way in large numbers to Igboland after the establishment of the Callectorate. See Ukwu, *Markets in West Africa*, Ibadan, 1969.

86. W.K.P.P., Col. 468, p. 31.



1911 was greater than practically anywhere else. There it set off a sudden and massive upsurge in groundnut production for export.<sup>87</sup> Naturally the railway turned men's eyes toward the sea and strengthened the economic linkage between the places it passed through and industrial Europe. But it also contributed toward the growth of internal commerce. From the beginning the railway was used for the northward movement of kola nuts; the Gonja-Bussa route was soon abandoned and Ghanaian kola came by ship to Lagos and thence by rail toward northern markets. Then, around 1910, the planting of the more productive kola trees began to the south of Abeokuta, rail freights were altered to discriminate against Ghanaian nuts and by the mid-twenties the kola industry of south-western Nigeria had been established and Ghanaian imports fell to small proportions.<sup>88</sup> The railway had a similar effect on the growth of food production around Ilorin for southern markets.<sup>89</sup> But at the same time it brought with it a substantial development and extension of European commercial hegemony. Each major station became a sort of inland port like Lagos in miniature. The means of transport, the regulations, the form of payment were all familiar to the European merchant as they were not to the Nigerian trader. Furthermore, depending on the strength of the colonial government's grip the European firms were more or less favoured in the allocation of sites. In the North, where the colonial government actually claimed the land by virtue of the 1900 proclamation, the discrimination was most glaring and until Nigerian amalgamation the colonial authorities actually used its administrative powers to drive southern traders away from the railway centres. At the other end of the scale the Egba administration at Abeokuta used its still autonomous power to limit the number of sites available to the European firms. Whatever the colonial government's policy however, the natural headquarters of the trading system represented by the line of rail was the terminus at Lagos where so many organizational skills geared to its working and, above all, commercial credit, was concentrated. Even the powerful Royal Niger Company found this to its cost. Its northern preserves were invaded by Lagos-based firms. The 'working agreement' it had made with the companies in the Oil Rivers, limiting competition on the lower Niger, was severely compromised once the rail came directly through to Kano and in 1919 the Royal Niger Company decided to establish a headquarters building at Lagos.

The first phase of colonial rule which might be said to have ended in 1914 was in many respects a period during which Nigeria's economy could really be said to have developed. Despite the growth of the foreign business sector Nigerian enterprise was very much to the fore. Heavy investments were made by Yoruba farmers and land-owners in the establishment of kola and cocoa plantations which could multiply the productivity of land in cash terms several times over. Rubber plantations were likewise

87. See Hogendorn, "The Rise of the Groundnut Industry in Northern Nigeria", Ph.D. thesis University of London, 1966.

88. See Perham (ed.), *Mining, Commerce and Finance*, London, 1947. p. 156. I.L.O. Report, op. cit., p. 17, in 1910 the Agricultural Department imported large quantities of *Nitida Kola* seed from Ghana. See also J.B. Webster, "The Bible and the Plough", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Dec. 1963.

89. For market license fees payable by traders and their effect on smaller scale Nigerian business see E.D. Morel, *Nigeria and her Problems*, Smith, Elder & Co., 1911, p. 174.

established in the area of Benin. Groundnuts were inter-sown with food crops in the Kano emirates and beyond. The prevalence of strong competition between European firms ensured that for these and the palm oil and kernels crops which remained the export mainstay, the producers mostly received a fair price.<sup>90</sup> Apart from a few unfortunate areas, notably in the Benue valley where the Niger Company had a virtual monopoly and could hold prices down, producers received a higher proportion of the prevailing world market price less transport costs in the decade prior to the First World War than they were ever to receive again for any length of time. There was real investment from overseas. The loans raised for railway construction were reflected in a surplus of imports over exports on the trading account, unlike much later investment which merely offset outflows of loan repayments and other invisible imports.<sup>91</sup> European-directed tin mining which began in earnest after 1909 extinguished Nigerian enterprise in this field by virtual expropriation.<sup>92</sup> But the tin companies while having no intention of benefiting anyone but their own shareholders brought in new capital, created employment at reasonable wages, and generated a market for the produce of a wide area in and around the Bauchi Plateau. The increasing agricultural specialization which this and similar developments in northern Yorubaland and the East represented must have paid dividends in terms of rising productivity. Internal trade was expanding as well as import/export business. As far as the latter was concerned Nigerian merchants were participating along with Europeans firms in the generally growing prosperity. It was largely during this period that a network of Hausa trading centres for the sale of cattle and for the purchase, storing and dispatch of kola to the North were established in Yorubaland.<sup>93</sup> In Kano the Dantatas and other families laid the foundation of their fortunes in the sudden groundnut boom after 1911. They, their agents and sub-agents pressed the farmers to plant, bulked the crops at the rail-head and retailed salt and cloth in the villages clearing a handsome profit on each operation.<sup>94</sup> At Lagos and in some other parts of the South the growth of a cash sales merchandise trade offered an opportunity which many Lagosians took of breaking through the semi-barter trade in produce and imported goods. They ordered consignments direct from wholesalers in Europe for retail in Lagos and beyond. As this was the richest end of the import/export business many made substantial gains.<sup>95</sup> Their wealth found overt expression in the commodious houses they erected in Lagos. These were the men of the new order and like other members of the Lagos élite they invested their profits in the education of their sons. Education was seen as the key to

90. *R.N.C. Records, Annual General Reports; U.K.P.P. Col. 468*, p. 31.

91. The value of imports exceeded that for exports for the years 1905, 1907-12, 1914 and 1915. See G.K. Helleiner, *Tabel IV-A-1*, p. 492. This occurred again 1920-22 and thereafter not until the "development period" from 1956 onward.

92. Perham (ed.), *Mining, Commerce and Finance*, p. 4.

93. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

94. Hogendorn, *op. cit.*

95. Despite the growing gap between Nigerian and European traders, the stiffer competition and difficulties of adapting to new conditions, Nigerians were still making large profits. See A.G. Hopkins, "R.B. Blaize, Merchant Prince of West Africa", *Tarikh*, vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 73 and 78.

many doors especially doors to the colonial administration and the European business complex which at the stroke of the magistrate's or accountant's pen could change the fortunes of whole communities. Education was seen in a somewhat similar light by individuals and families right along the coastal districts and their investment of money and effort resulted in the luxuriant growth of what the colonial government chose to call "mushroom schools".<sup>96</sup> On the eve of the First World War a large part of Nigeria was the scene of intense, productive and remunerative activity and very substantial investments were being made in the acquisition of new skills and the development of new forms of production in the hope of a yet more prosperous future.

Many hopes of this kind were to be dashed, for the pre-1914 prosperity was to be arrested as the colonial system tightened its grip. The war itself helped to bring this about. The economies on unproductive military manpower made at the beginning of the colonial period were swept away by the mobilization of men to fight the colonial government's war and the shuttling back and forth of troops tended to destroy rather than create new commercial nexuses.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps more serious than this diversion of effort was the war's effect on the position of the European firms and those doing business with them. At the outbreak of the war the German trading companies which had accounted for a very substantial proportion of Nigeria's foreign trade and which had been comparatively generous in their credit policies, were closed down. This in some areas entailed the closure of the only trading depot; in the greater part of the South it meant a sudden reduction in the amount of competition.<sup>98</sup> The remaining European firms found themselves in the happy position of having more business available than they could cope with and war conditions prevented their increasing their staffs. Monopolistic agreements which all had dreamed of, suddenly became feasible and were now made effective.<sup>99</sup> Nigeria was cut off from the Hamburg plants which crushed palm kernels. The market price of Nigerian exports plummeted downward and did not recover until 1917. At the same time the price of Nigeria's principal imports went soaring up as the conversion to war industry in Europe reduced the supply of manufactured goods. The income terms of trade, which had hitherto been improving now turned against Nigeria.<sup>100</sup> The real picture was even worse than the foreign trade statistics alone would suggest. The embattled European firms resolutely thrust down the producer price of export crops far below even the abysmally low world market price and while farmers were producing more to secure a greatly reduced amount of import goods, the European firms were making profits which in

97. Haywood and Clarke, *op. cit.*, part I.

98. A. Osuntokun, *"Disaffection and Revolts in Nigeria During the First World War"*, University of W. Ontario, Mimeo, 1970; U.K. *Parliamentary Papers* 1920 Cd. 468, pp. 30, 31, and 41.

99. U.K.P.P. 1920 Cd. 468, p. 30.

100. See C.C. Wrigley *"Nigeria's Terms of Trade,"* Ibadan University, History Department, Seminar Paper, 1966.

the case of the Niger Company amounted to five to six times their moderate pre-war profits.<sup>101</sup>

If the Nigerian economy as a whole made a great leap forward in the period 1894 to 1914, the First World War marked a great leap forward by the colonial system and the foreign companies. In the East in particular the construction of the new railway as far as Udi between 1913 and 1916 sounded the knell of the coastal middlemen. The European firms scrambled for sites along the line and from there entered into close contact with the old web of periodical markets and the women traders who bulked the produce from the villages.<sup>102</sup> We have a record of the effect of this for Uzuakoli—formerly a town of blacksmiths and other craftsmen working imported raw materials—it quickly became an inland entrepot with shops full of imported manufactures and the craftsmen of yesterday were rolling up the casks of palm oil to the new warehouses.<sup>103</sup> On the river, Onitsha came to prominence with the transfer there of the Niger Company depot and the greatest advantage went to those who worked close under its shadow. Nigeria's two major ports, Lagos and Port Harcourt, incomplete close dredged to admit larger vessels and well-placed at railway termini sucked trade away from their unimproved competitors. Calabar, Opobo, Bonny, Brass, Forcados—names famous in the history of Nigeria's seaborne trade, withered into atrophy along with the Ijo trading houses that had made them great. In Port Harcourt and Lagos war-time controls and the government's allocation of shipping space operated to the disadvantage of Nigerian traders and further strengthened the position of the European firms which were better placed to benefit from them. The tin mining companies were given assistance by government to secure labour since tin was a strategic material and the real wages of workers on the tin field fell heavily. On all sides the government threw in its weight to reduce Nigerian gains from productive effort. Whatever benefits there were went mainly to those who connected themselves with the colonial system. The shortage of European staff resulted in the employment of many Nigerians in the place of those who left though not at the same salaries. Nigerian mining engineers took over in the tin fields, Nigerianization went on faster on the railways, more clerks were employed by government and commercial firms alike. Those who had invested in education had proved the most prescient of all.

The war arrested government-sponsored development. Amalgamation had just been effected in order to pool resources and create a larger creditworthy unit for more

#### 101. Royal Niger Company Profits: N000

1900	124	1905	138	1912	186	1917	—	760
1901	76	1906	158	1913	160	1918	326	752
1902	99	—		1914	Loss	1919	550	1100
1903	120	1910	468	1915	228	1921	Loss	
1904	134	1911	194	1916	662			

Source: *RNC Records*, Royal Niger Company and Layard Bros. 17/11/20. 11 November 1920.

102. See Migeod, op. cit., p. 24 for sketch of Onitsha in 1921. U.I. Ukwu, op. cit., *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, p. 659.

103. A.J. Uzuakoli: *A Short History*, London, 1964.

railway building. But the eastern railway was carried up to the Udo coal-field and no further. The completion of wharves at Port Harcourt and Apapa was left until after the war. And the money for the Udi railway was found from internal resources while the greater part of the remaining available funds was diverted to war purposes. Pre-war revenues were insufficient and as the liquor traffic which had been so large a revenue earner before was now severely reduced by the suspension of supplies of German gin, other forms of revenue has to be found. An export tax was levied on cash crops which further reduced producer earnings.<sup>104</sup> The system of direct taxation was extended to the South and was introduced into Yorubaland toward the end of the war, provoking the tax riots that Dr Atanda has discussed in "The Okeiho Rising of 1916". The Oyo Alafinate was among the first to suffer because of the assumed similarity between its institutions and those of the Northern emirates which served as the model. The turn of others came soon afterwards. From 1921 onward the blot of direct taxation spread southward amid a welter of riots, protests, patrols and punitive expeditions across the Niger and Benue Rivers until its oppressive dark shadow had reached virtually every part of the land by 1929. Less was said in Nigeria than in other parts of Africa about the supposedly beneficial effect of taxation in forcing the idle to work and so on. Revenue was the principal object and wartime need set a standard in screw twisting that was to be followed in the easier times of peace. A series of assessments and reassessments plunged the tax-collectors' hands deeper into the pockets of the Kano farmers who had been able to afford an unwonted number of small luxuries when the groundnut boon had first begun in 1912.<sup>105</sup> The administration congratulated itself on the ₦400,000 revenue figure for post-war Kano with little regard for what this meant in terms of stifled enterprise and disappointment at the village level. The 'Native Administrations' also came in for praise whenever they raised their revenue or made what amounted to a corrupt contribution to the Red Cross Fund or Imperial Defence.<sup>106</sup> Officials admitted that the 'Native Administrations' had got

104. Perham (ed.), *Mining, Commerce and Finance*, p. 157.

105. See Hogendorn, op. cit.: Perhaps these have been erroneously described as "tax riots" which, as Dr. Atanda points out, does not do justice to the complexity of the socio-political factors involved. Nevertheless, the pressure came from the Colonial Government via the Alafin to administer on the cheap and general a surplus in the forms of Red Cross funds for remission to the centre. In terms of the internal development of Yoruba society the way it was mediated is significant; in broader terms it represented part of the general squeeze which led on to the imposition of direct taxation. See J.A. Atanda, "The Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, IV (4), pp. 497 ff. Margery Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, p. 120, gives the following figures for the revenue of the Northern Native Administrations:

1911	₦ 294,393
1915	648,210
1919	1,072,014
1924	1,478,000
1928	2,098,442
1929	2,767,134

106. *P.P. 1920 Col*, 468.



rather out of control during the war and from that admission one may safely conclude that for every shilling on the books of the rapidly erected Native Treasuries, a good few extra unaccounted pennies were extracted from the farmers' small surpluses.<sup>107</sup> It should not have been a matter of surprise to the Royal Niger Company that its cash sales took a downward plunge between 1914 and 1917.<sup>108</sup> Nor need one wonder at the sudden halt during the same years in Nigeria's previously rising specie imports. Both indicated a large transfer of resources from the Nigerian to the colonial economy and during that period a new set of norms were established which were to persist in the years to come.

One speaks of 'norms' but one of the norms that came with the new importance of the colonial economy was the very waywardness and uncertainty that resulted from the strengthened linkage between Nigeria and the world market which at that particular time was unusually unstable. The closing years of the war saw a frenetic commercial boom as prices for Nigerian produce rose, as shipping was released from the wartime regime of controls and big international combines such as Lever Brothers with large capital muscled in on the produce buying business. In expectation of a large expansion of trade, merchants built up their inventories and the old battle for produce broke out once more with touts urging farmers to bring their crops for sale to firms which were now engaged in aggressive buying.<sup>109</sup> Everywhere in 1919/20 there was confidence that Nigeria was on the brink of a new prosperous era. On the tin mining field, at the five-year old Udi coalfield, on railways and in the Civil Service workers agitated and struck work to rectify the low wage regime of wartime years, while employers were inclined to make increases available out of the larger revenues they expected to see rolling in. Then the boom broke. War-shattered Europe proved incapable of paying for the goods the merchants were confidently preparing for dispatch.<sup>110</sup> Almost overnight produce prices came rattling down and while dismayed farmers watched on in bewilderment, merchants with overstocked warehouses and minimal liquidity rushed for cover. The European firms found it under the wealthy wings of the big international combines and in a wave of amalgamations unequalled since the 1880s. They emerged chastened but in better organizational shape. As for the Nigerian merchants who had ventured out on their own, investing wartime earnings, in the importing business now more accessible since the removal of controls, they were particularly badly caught. There was a wave of bankruptcies in Lagos and the confident independent businessmen of 1919/20 were back at their desks and canteens in 1921 working as clerks and agents for the now completely predominating European survivors.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile government went serenely on, collecting its ever-expanding revenue, enlarging its ever-growing administrative network, developing its railway system. Once more the school leavers were the fortunate ones—provided they did not

107. A.C.G. Hastings, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-26.

108. This represented a break in a rising trend indicating abnormal conditions. *R.N.C. Records O.G.M. Report for 1916*. Cash sales rose again in 1916.

109. McPhee, *op. cit.*

110. Lethbridge, *West Africa the Elusive* 1922, p. 225. *R.N.C. Records, Proceedings of 40th O.G.M.*, 24 January 1921.

111. *P.P. 1920 Col. 468*, pp. 31 and 32.

aspire to topmost post—and the products of the expanding educational system found remunerative employment despite the Cassandras in the government's education establishment who were as sure as they had been in pre-war days that the continuing Nigerian school building enterprise was misdirected and overproductive.

From the sharp squall of 1921, the Nigerian foreign trade and business sector sailed on unsteadily toward the devastating hurricane of 1930-34. Produce prices staggered upward after 1921 to a peak in 1926/27, then sagged and fell to the unprecedented lows of the depression years. Tin prices followed a rather similar cycle. Railway building took up again at the end of the war years. The eastern line was extended from Udi to Kafanchan, Jos and Zaria. Parts of the Kano line were relaid and two spurs were thrust out from Kano to Kaura Namoda and Nguru.<sup>112</sup> Labour was once more mobilized for railway construction but this time under the more vigilant eyes of tougher tax gathering administrations and with a larger number of men with the contacts, skills and equipment waiting in the South to step in and seize the staff job opportunities that the new lines created. Between these two there was little room left for the local populations to derive as full and lasting benefits from the constructional work as had those through whose land the earlier railways had thrust. By 1930 the main post-war rail building phase was over. By that same date the expansion of the tin mine labour force had stopped and so had the extension of the European firms' branches. The onset of the depression reduced the amount of revenue at the government's disposal for capital projects. By 1932 the government had embarked upon retrenchment cutting down its expenditure on existing devices. As for private European businesses, they were the subject of further amalgamations which produced the UAC in 1929 and a very substantial reduction in the number of companies working on the tin field.<sup>113</sup> Employment was cut back on all sides by the closing of redundant commercial depots and despite a substantial diversion of labour into gold mining the total number of mining workers also dropped. Once again the companies sought to throw over the greater part of their losses from falling export prices onto the workers and farmers. Wages were heavily reduced on the tin field and less severely so in other branches of employment. The producer price for cash crops was resolutely forced back by the buyers' combinations until it became scarcely worthwhile for farmers to sell to them. Between 1935 and 1938 there was a short recovery then prices fell once more and at the beginning of the Second World War Nigeria was once more suffering from depression in its foreign trading sector.

The 1930s depression was so severe that the whole colonial economy together with the European metropolis appeared to falter and lose its nerve. By contrast the indigenous Nigerian economy, at least at the early stages of the depression, appeared to flourish. The rhythms of the world economy and the Nigerian economy had got quite out of phase. While the world market was wallowing in the doldrums the traditional indicators of Nigeria's economic health were set at the fair. The early 1930s saw harvest after harvest of unprecedented size and value in Nigeria's North. The weather was unusually clement, there was practically no sign of drought, a few

112. G. Walker, *Traffic and Transport in Nigeria*, London, 1959, p. 65.

113. *Mining, Finance and Commerce*, pp. 22-23.

scattered locust attacks were mostly mopped up quickly by improved locust control methods, vaccination was having an effect on the general health of Nigeria's cattle herds. Food prices fell and there was a widespread feeling of contentment and security in the North.<sup>114</sup> In the South, new cocoa plantations were coming on tap and even at the low current prices they represented an improvement in farmers' earnings.<sup>115</sup> The low prices offered for palm oil on the other hand simply led to a diversion of southern oil to new markets opening up in the North helped by the lowering of transport costs brought about by the completion of the eastern railway in 1926.<sup>116</sup> In other ways the weakening of the export sector led to a strengthening of internal linkages. Much effort had been expended by the government's Agricultural Department in developing cotton production with the aim of feeding British industry. But the British Cotton Growing Association buyers had seldom been able to offer more than half the price paid by the traders who brought in local markets for the still flourishing Nigerian textile industry. What the BCGA got mostly represented semi-forced, end of season sales by farmers anxious to raise cash for tax. In 1931 with world prices at rock bottom the BCGA could hardly enter the market at all and the enlarged cotton production resulting from the adoption of the government's higher yielding strains redounded to the benefit of local industry which was more active than ever before, supplying cloth to those with no cash to purchase imported articles. Handicrafts generally, received a new lease of life. Even donkeys, camels and other pack animals came back onto the roads in the middle thirties offering rates which the new motor lorries could not match.<sup>118</sup> The traditional elements in the Nigerian economy seemed to be winning all along the line. But there was a sinister element in the re-emergence of the donkeys which will come up later. In the meanwhile it is worth looking at the significance of the more extensive use of their new competitor, the motor lorry, which can be regarded as a much more unambiguously favourable development.

Lorries had been used on Nigeria's roads since before the First World War but it was not until the late twenties that the upward spiral of vehicle efficiency, traffic density, road construction and above all the supply of skills and servicing became rapid enough for one to speak of a transport revolution. The advent of the new technology was heralded by the first protests from the railway in 1926 that the lorries were stealing its traffic.<sup>119</sup> The lorry represented more than just a new form of transport. Its impact differed radically from that of the railways in a number of ways. While the railway tended to pile trade into narrow channels that ended in the coastal termini where the European firms were strongly ensconced, the lorries moved more flexibly across country wherever the roads were motorable linking up the internal markets and promoting local interchange of products. It is true that during the inter-war period the vehicles were heavily concentrated in Lagos and its hinterland and were largely engaged on produce evacuation for export. But a few vehicles could very considerably affect a local transport situation as was, for example, the case with the Jos-Bauchi area

114. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports 1930 and 1931.*

115. See Buldwin and Gallietti, *Nigerian Cocoa Farmers.*

116. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports.*

117. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports, 1933, p. 33*

118. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports, 1930, p. 28.*

119. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

where growing towns were choking from a chronic shortage of foodstuffs despite the mobilization of armies of pack animals until motor lorries saved the day after 1930.<sup>120</sup> Lorry traffic assisted the eastern extension of the Yoruba cocoa plantations to Ekiti and to Kabba during the 1930s. East of the Niger lorry traffic developed slightly later; the bicycle which had been in use since the beginning of the century was still the major innovation in the transportation of palm oil and kernels. In other ways the lorry latched on more easily than the railway to the indigenous Nigerian economy. It provided a quick means of getting from place to place for petty traders travelling with their goods between local markets. Above all it was very largely Nigerian-owned and run from end to end. The European firms did not enter the road transport business apart from two or three specialized exceptions. Lebanese traders provided more serious competition especially from the Second World War onward but they concentrated mainly on long straight hauls of produce. The all-purpose traffic was almost entirely in Nigerian hands. It assisted the farmers and petty traders but above all it gave Nigerian merchants and produce brokers a chance to recover some of the ground they had lost during the First World War and the 1921 slump. It was they who bought and operated the lorries usually with hire purchase credit from the European firms. They thus secured an independent entrepreneurial position which they could exploit by directing produce toward Ijebu canoe ports on the lagoon (many of the lorry owners were Ijebus) rather than to railway stations. Within a very short time the Railway Department was crying out for protection from the motor transporters' vigorous competition. In 1933 a committee was set up to adjudicate the matter, the railway demanding strict controls that would have driven lorries back into the less profitable lines of traffic. The demand fortunately was turned down and despite the railway's lowering its rates in Yorubaland to a minimum 2k a mile, the lorry owners were still able to compete and make a profit.<sup>121</sup> The sort of gains that could be made by combining buying with transporting can be seen from Chief Awolowo's autobiography and it was no coincidence that that rising politician first made his name as Secretary to the powerful Nigerian Motor Transport Union.<sup>122</sup> The recrudescence of Nigerian business enterprise was marked by the establishment of the National Bank among others in 1934 and by the late thirties the Nigerian produce buyers were in a strong enough position to challenge the European firms' control of the export shipment business. There followed the well-known retaliation by UAC and others in defence of their position followed by an enquiry into their monopolistic manoeuvres and the final dénouement of the Cocoa Marketing Law which froze the position as it then stood leaving the European firms legally confirmed in their possession of the lions' share of the export business.<sup>123</sup>

It has been mentioned that the growth of motor traffic was geographically uneven. The pattern in the 1930s was a significant and a familiar one—high density in Lagos

120. Hermon Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 83; *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports*, 1928, p. 12.

121. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 111-113.

122. See O. Awolowo, *Awo*, chapter 8. One could also make losses as Chief Awolowo's business career equally demonstrates.

123. W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, 1918-1939*, Vol. 2. *Problems of Economic Policy*, Part 2 (London, 1940), pp. 121-13.

and its hinterland, somewhat less in the East and very low in the North. Government expenditure on roads provides only part of the explanation. Much money was spent on road construction north of the Niger and Benue in the crucial period of the 1920s and the northern emirates remained quite enthusiastic road builders thereafter.<sup>124</sup> It was more a question of technical skills being more available around the ports, petrol prices being lower and the cocoa industry being comparatively compact and profit generating. However, this may be, when the motor transport industry developed really rapidly after the second World War southern transporters moved up onto northern roads and were providing a very substantial proportion of the transport services there by 1950. In the 1930s there was just a general lack of motor transport in the North. Nigerian entrepreneurs did not enter the new industry and a substantial proportion of what vehicles there were, were run by the railway's motor transport service, by the UAC to Borno by Lebanese to Fort Lamy and by the tin mining companies.<sup>125</sup> Nigerian transporters were still using pack animals and this brings us back to the donkeys that were beating lorries out of business in the Zaria-Kano area in the middle 1930s.

This was in some respect a sinister development and now that the highly competitive, efficient and indeed beneficial character of the new motor industry has been demonstrated, it is easier to explain why. The donkeys should not have been able to beat out the lorries had prices in the northern markets not reached absurdly low levels by the mid-1930s. In the first years of the depression it was a matter for congratulation that an unprecedented series of excellent harvests produced unusual prosperity which was marked by falling food prices. In the North where famine could have terrible effects—and the last great famine of 1913 that had decimated villages and produced widespread social disaster was still a lively memory—falling food prices were an indication that all was well. But during the 1930s food prices fell and fell and fell. By 1934 it had become evident that something was amiss, that the falling food prices and indeed the falling prices of all local products had something unnatural about them.<sup>126</sup> The prices of some imported goods were also falling, most notable textiles—this was part of the general deflationary tendency in the markets of the world—but the deflation in the North was more severe than anywhere else. What was happening was that the local markets were being drained of specie and there was a consequent appreciation in the value of the currency itself in terms of local products. And the reason for this was the grinding effect of heavy direct taxation. Almost from the start there had been something of a forced character to the sales of cash crops in the North. Just before the tax gatherers went round, and their visits were synchronized in Kano and the north-west with the groundnut and cotton harvests, farmers became more willing to sell their crops and sometimes, especially in the case of cotton, they sold at a loss. This element became more marked when groundnut prices fell heavily after 1929. Whereas palm oil and cocoa exports from Nigeria more or less varied with the price paid during the depression years, groundnut exports were much less price responsive and in 1934 when the derisory price of £2.7 (N4.14) per ton was paid the

124. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 108, f.1.

125. *ibid.*, p. 111.

126. See *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports for 1932*. Food was a glut on the markets in Bauchi, Keffi, Lafia and Nasarawa. In Idoma local farmers attacked Ibo traders and immigrants around the railway whom they thought to be responsible for the low food prices.



farmers actually sold 20 percent more groundnuts than they had done the previous year when they were receiving double the price.<sup>127</sup> They could not afford not to. They had to have the cash to meet the tax gatherers' demands. For while all other prices were drastically falling, tax remained substantially the same. It was in 1934 that Nadel collected his figures showing the Nupe farmers working desperately at mat-making and other crafts throughout the dry season for a cash earning pittance, practically all of which was snatched away in tax.<sup>128</sup> In a few cases tax was remitted<sup>129</sup> and some relief was offered but it was done more or less on the principle that one must thoroughly empty the peasants' pockets but leave the shirt on his back. After all, the government was very happy at the remarkable financial efficiency of the northern Native Administrations when all other government institutions were suffering from lack of funds. Retrenchment of government personnel was being avoided in the North by the simple expedient of transferring technical officers to the books of N.A.s as 'experts' and 'advisors'. This was not the time to relinquish revenue. But the result was that the administration became the main engine for sucking specie out of the indigenous economy and providing a substantial proportion of the general currency haemorrhage that accompanied each deficit in the Nigerian balance of payments.<sup>130</sup> The result was that, despite other favourable features, the indigenous economy in the North was gasping for lack of means of payment by 1935 and the rash of enterprising counterfeiters (mostly Ijebu of course!) who appeared at this juncture<sup>131</sup> could be regarded as public benefactors since massive deflation was having a seriously depressive effect upon production in the hitherto prosperous indigenous sector.

It was at this time that the gap between the economies of North and South began to widen seriously. This development in the field of motor transport has already been

127.	Cocoa			Palm Oil			Groundnuts		
	Export Volume	Price		Export Volume	Price		Export Volume	Price	
1929	55	72		132	48		147	22	
1930	52	60		136	32		146	18	
1931	53	38		118	12		160	10	
1932	71	32		116	20		188	14	
1933	61	18		129	14		205	12	
1934	77	28		113	10		245	6	
1935	88	34		143	22		184	14	
1936	81	34		163	22		218	16	
1937	103	56		146	26		326	12	
1938	97	28		110	12		180	6	
1939	114	34		121	12		147	12	
1940	90	28		132	12		169	10	
	Volume 000 tons			Price per ton					

Source: G.K. Helleiner, Tables II-B-1, 3 and 4 and IV-A-8.

128. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium* (London, 1935).

129. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports*, 1936, p. 13, remission of tax under threat of emigration in Borgu; p. 30, suggestions to increase tax in Kano after better paying crop. Reports for 1932, pp. 41 and 44 recorded a propensity to escape by migration in Kebbi and Zaria.

130. *Mining, Commerce and Finance*, p. 200.

131. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports*, 1936, p. 15.

noted. It was to be seen too in other areas—in houses-building for example. Abeokuta and Lagos were largely covered by pan roofs in 1911 while Ibadan was still a thatched town. By 1921 pan roofs were extending over Ibadan and more storied buildings were being erected. During the 1930's storied buildings and pan roofs were appearing in Ekiti and by the end of that decade they were to be seen in some of the Kabba towns.<sup>132</sup> House improvement went along with other forms of progress most notably educational development. Here again the pattern was the same. School building spread inland from the coast and from the Onitsha/Asaba areas. By the 1930s the new drive in the South was toward secondary education while Ilorin and Kabba were extending their primary schools at southern speeds. On all sides south of the Niger and Benue Rivers improvement associations and progress unions were springing up, devoted to these and similar objectives. For the most part these organizations drew their help and inspiration from townspeople who had migrated and returned home with new ideas and wider perspectives. These migrants also returned with more cash in their pockets because low as wages might be in the big cities, they left those who were fortunate enough to get jobs with more cash in hand than their farming brothers at home.

What was more, the regularity with which the wages were paid was a factor in credit worthiness. There were ways of avoiding tax in cities that did not obtain in rural areas and the lowest wage earners in Lagos were in any case exempt by law.<sup>133</sup> Here was another way in which rural areas, except for the richest cocoa growing districts, fell behind the cities. Here too was another way in which the North fell behind the South. Throughout the 1930s taxation per head of population was notably higher in the North than in the South, the women of Aba frightened the government out of taxing them and others like them in the way it did the poor farmers of Nupeland and the North.<sup>134</sup> One had to have cash to spare to be able to invest in the education of one's children. One also had to see education as a passport to substantial posts and here too the northern farmers had less to hope for than their counterparts in the South. The railways, commerce and the central organs of government were recruiting clerical staff from the South where such staff had always been available.<sup>135</sup> The Native Administrations which represented a large area of prospective employment used other criteria for selecting staff than mere possession of a leaving certificate. In 1932 a British officer went to explain to irate parents at Minna whose educated sons could not find employment that they should not have been spending money on their children's schooling for such mercenary reasons and that the school was there simply to satisfy those with a taste for learning!<sup>136</sup> It was not surprising that in the face of such attitudes

132. Morel, *op. cit.*, p. 78; Migeod, *op. cit.*, p. 303; *N.N. Provincial Annual Reports*, 1929, p. 13; 1933, p. 37; 1936, p. 28; 1937, p. 30.

133. See *Mining, Commerce and Finance*, p. 231.

134. *ibid.* p. 229.

135. *U.K. P.P.* 1920 *Col.* 468, p. 64, in 1920 the Northern Provinces did not provide a single clerk or artisan for Government Service; Hermon Hodge, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

136. *Northern Nigeria Provincial Annual Reports*, 1938, p. 44; there were other obstacles such as teaching in Hausa in Adamawa, when Fulani was used as a medium of instruction there were more applicants than places in the schools, *ibid.*, 1933, p. 5. The schools' curricula were deliberately altered in 1936 to ensure that some graduates would not qualify as clerks, *ibid.*, 1936, p. 2; a number of schools were closed down while their teachers were sent on agricultural courses for sixteen months, *ibid.*, p. 16.

on the part of those principally responsible for educational development, ardour for schooling remained a rather localized phenomenon in the North.

The period of the Second World War which could be said to last from 1940 to 1950, when wartime controls were finally relaxed, was a period of more outright exploitation of the Nigerian economy by the colonial power than anything that had gone on before. British colonial rule up to then, apart from the exceptional circumstances of the First World War, had been a rather loose affair as far as its economic aspects were concerned. The colonial state was seen essentially as an impartial policeman holding the ring for the operation of economic forces. It held open Nigeria's market to world trade which, it was hoped would mean predominantly British trade—although it did not always turn out like that because between 1900 and 1914 Germany was taking some 40 percent of Nigeria's exports and by 1939 Britain's share of Nigeria's import bill had fallen from the 70-80 percent of the first thirty years of the century to 54 percent and it fell again from there to below half in the post-war decades.<sup>137</sup> Otherwise the state was not in theory supposed to interfere substantially. The colony was expected to balance its own budget and service its own loans; which it did after the imperial subsidy to Northern Nigeria was suspended in 1916. Those direct transfers of wealth from Nigeria at governmental level that did take place, occurred more or less incidentally rather than as a result of expressed policy. The Royal Mint for example made a net profit from the provision of Nigeria's coinage which exceeded the value of the subsidies accorded to Northern Nigeria up to 1916. Nigeria made a contribution of £12 million to Britain to help her fight the First World War.<sup>138</sup> The West African Currency Board in effect lent Britain money by holding its reserves in British securities.<sup>139</sup> The various pension funds operated by Nigerian governmental institutions pursued 'orthodox' investment policies such that their portfolios were filled with low-yielding British and other stock while the higher-yielding Nigerian government securities figured near the bottom of the list!<sup>140</sup> The Agricultural Department threw the bulk of its effort into the development of crops that would benefit British industry, their activity with regard to cotton being a particularly glaring example since the avowed object was to divert cotton from local Nigerian industry to the textile mills of Lancashire. As we have seen, the policy was a failure, but involved a good deal of misspent, Nigerian financed, energy. Government attitudes to economic policy were influenced by widespread prejudices that assumed Nigerian 'backwardness', that assumed Nigeria's role to be that of a provider of raw materials and a market for British goods, that assumed Nigeria's need for technical rather than other forms of education, that assumed the main source of innovation and efficiency in Nigeria's economy to be the government and European directed enterprise. Fortunately the limited activity of the state in the economic sphere ensured that such assumptions were only occasionally and intermittently acted upon. But as new ideas began to develop about the scope of state action in the aftermath of the depression and during the

137. Helleiner, *op. cit.*, Table IV-A-14 and 15.

138. *U.K.P.P. 1920 Col. 468.*

139. *Mining, Commerce and Finance*, p. 190.

140. See Oyemakinde, *op. cit.*, The Railway Provident Fund, schedule for investments.

Second World War, government began to interfere on a substantial scale and such assumptions as these became operational. The first instance of action of this kind was the legislation passed in 1934 and 1937 imposing import quotas on goods imported from non-British sources. The object was to exclude cheap Japanese textiles and the effect of the legislation was probably most severely felt by the poorer areas and poorer people on the fringes of the southern exporting districts who were then adopting cheap singles and shorts as daily wear.<sup>141</sup> The operation of the produce marketing boards during the war and immediate post-war period had even more serious consequences. Apart from holding producer prices at a low level and accumulating surpluses which were invested in low-yielding and rapidly depreciating British stock, the boards offered their produce at market rates which were more designed to safeguard the interests of consumers in Britain than producers in Nigeria. It is impossible to compute the extent of the transfers involved since there was no such thing as a free market under war conditions and the war conditions themselves with the apparatus of controls they threw up determined the stability of consumer demand.

All one can do is to note the low level of prices for cash crops and the quite dramatic worsening in Nigeria's income terms of trade during the war years.<sup>142</sup> Within the country, the government intervened in the economic sphere with a whole array of controls—controls on produce marketing, controls on transport, controls on food marketing and food prices. The area in which free Nigerian enterprise could operate profitably was restricted as never before and entrepreneurs were given the strongest encouragement to look to the State to maintain their competitive position by agitating for licences and other favours. The consequences of this system were only mitigated by the inefficiencies of the imperfectly organized bureaucracy which was incapable of carrying out a good number of its self-imposed duties. They were mitigated too by the political pressures Nigerian society was able at various junctures and in various sectors to bring to bear upon the government itself.

This period occasioned a marriage of interests between the nationalist politicians and the Nigerian workers. The former owned and published newspapers to articulate public opinion which for all practical purposes was workers' opinion. For the workers constituted the bulk of the literate population which made the newspaper enterprise viable. As it happened, while workers looked towards the nationalist politicians for advice on the best strategy to handle the imperial employer, the nationalists saw the workmen as a formidable pressure group that could effectively harass the foreign masters. The atmosphere was already abundantly charged for the Pullen Marketing Scheme had failed to arrest the constantly and fast rising cost of living. Yet workers demands for higher emoluments had fallen on deaf ears and there was a mutual feeling of distrust between the government as the chief employer of labour on the one hand, and the Nigerian workers' front on the other. It was within this troubled situation of 1945 that Michael Imoudu the fire-eating president of the Railway Workers Union assumed leadership of the entire Nigerian workers and saw them through a 45-day general strike of far reaching consequences.<sup>143</sup>

141. C.f. *N.N. Provincial Annual Reports*, 1938, p. 17.

142. See C.C. Wrigley, *op. cit.*,

143. Oyemakinde, *op. cit.*, chapter 7.

The post-Second World War years thus began with labour and management accepting each other in the interest of industrial harmony and although an uneasy relationship occasionally featured, there was no occurrence of another general strike for about two decades. In the meantime, government became more concerned about economic development and was willing to invest funds for this purpose. And this was in keeping with the spirit of the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme which was designed to affect all British dependencies perhaps as a fitting reward for their contributions to the war that had just ended.<sup>144</sup> While government addressed itself to the task of solving the problems of demobilization, it had to reckon with a post-war population of more articulate and sensitive citizens whose leaders were intensively critical of official measures. Constitutions were drawn and dismissed in advance of schedule and the general political climate was such that no perceiving colonial official thought independence could be too long delayed. And on the economic plane the period witnessed a global post-war boom which provided swift and paying markets for Nigerian exports. Despite the hardly justifiable deductions by the marketing boards, producers' income reached unprecedented heights and much money was around. Cocoa plantations extended to previously uncultivated areas; the groundnut farms of the North expanded in the same encouraging circumstances while oil palm produce attracted more lands. Perhaps the greatest single contribution of government was the building of motor roads which made possible the evacuation of these valuable farm products for eventual shipment. And of course it should be noted that the earlier efforts of the Agricultural Department in distributing insecticides and fungicides had yielded great dividends. The totality of the bumper production under discussion was otherwise a reflection of the energy and initiative of the Nigerians themselves.<sup>145</sup>

The beneficiaries of the resultant opulence extended beyond the circle of farmers. For example the class of produce buyers expanded and the big men in this group became important agents of European firms. They owned carriage lorries and employed young men to drive them. More than ever before, plantations assumed conspicuous significance and represented easily transferable wealth, the legacies of which children expected from their parents. If land had been communally owned from time immemorial, acreages of tangible trees now became bona fide property of specific individuals and the letter writers and lawyers who were involved in the deeds of conveyances made their comfortable wealth. Women traders had their share of business for with the increasing purchasing power people bought a lot of clothing items and other goods and market days significantly took the appearance of festivals. Local craftsmen also smelt of the current prosperity: traditional cloth weavers enjoyed greater demand for what they produced as wealthy men needed ample yardage for the then fashionable voluminous attires while embroiderers were busy with new and complex designs to impress generous gentlemen and ladies. More lasting accumulation of wealth was represented in building construction at this time when iron roofing was

144. F.L. Osunsade, "The Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme and the First Plan Period in Nigeria", M.Sc. (Economics) Thesis (Ibadan, 1965).

145. Wale Oyemakinde, "West Africa Between the World Wars: The Economics of the Colonial Impact", *Ghana Social Journal*, 1972.



no longer a luxury even in the villages. Indeed the first decade after the second World War brought various degrees of fortune for most Nigerian families and perhaps the highest common factor was the urge to send children to school especially as there was no difficulty with the payment of fees. And as from 1955 when the former Western Region started the free primary education scheme to be followed latter by the Eastern Region, parents did not have to pay for the training of their children.

Nigerians were virtually in control of their own affairs by now and while the colonial government had been guilty of underspending, the story henceforth turned to one of overspending. More roads, schools and hospitals were built and the railway which now became a corporation was extended to tap the produce of the north-east and aid the distribution of imports in that region. But while these desirable projects were being prosecuted, it would appear that overzealous leaders smartly diverted some public funds into private coffers as some of the subsequent commissions of enquiry revealed. The marketing boards continued to tax the farmers on the produce of their farms and much of the heavily publicized agricultural investments were quite often misdirected and unproductive loans that failed to achieve the declared intentions just as the farm settlement scheme promised much more than actual achievement.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless agriculture remained the bed-rock of the Nigerian economy and in the pre-independence decade greater crop specialization featured to the extent that agriculture became more commercialized and the cash crop industries drew off seasonal labour that had previously been engaged in various handicrafts at home.

In the field of commerce there was a steady growth of Nigerian enterprise mainly based upon the further exploitation of the possibilities of the transport revolution. This development was to some extent assisted by government action in the form of improved credit institutions although the full fruits of this in the banking field were felt more in the next decade than in the 1950s. It was assisted too in a certain fashion by the change in the market strategy of the European firms. From the war onward the big companies began to retreat to new prepared positions. They drew out of the rural retail trade to concentrate on export/import business and investment in large department stores and wholesale depots in the wealthy cities. The older concerns such as UAC also became more interested in investment in modern manufacturing industry as a means of retaining their grip on the market which was challenged by the establishment of agencies by foreign suppliers which engaged in credit trading to retailers in Nigeria. This, together with government tariff and other policies designed to encourage import substitution industries, led to an accelerating growth of new industries in major centres, particularly Lagos and Port Harcourt. By the end of the 1950s the foreign suppliers were following the example of UAC in order to protect the market for their goods in Nigeria. Extraordinary profits were made by those who mounted these businesses contrasting with the rather meagre results of government owned enterprises. A considerable proportion of the value they created left the country in the form of salary and interest payments but Nigeria's manufacturing capacity was in the process considerably enlarged and a few closely circumscribed areas of the country especially around Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt and Kaduna drew ahead of the rest. A final important development must be mentioned namely the oil industry—

146. David Osifo, *The Farm Settlement Schemes*, NISER Publication.

the main feature of the decade of the 1960s whose potentiality and consequences have yet to be measured but which has accounted for continuing economic growth in the last ten years while the cash crop sector has been comparatively languishing owing to renewed weakness in the world market for its products.

The period since 1950 has been one of more rapid economic transformation than anything seen previously in the period under discussion. Significant improvements in productivity have occurred as a result of increased regional specialization in production and the introduction on a substantial scale of new technology. In the latter respect in particular modern economic change can be differentiated from the changes that occurred in the Nigerian economy in the 19th century. In the 19th century, as has been seen, the Nigerian economy was anything but static or unchanging. There were many important shifts in the loci of production; there were equally frequent alterations in the allocation of wealth within the society. These both lent a dynamism to the economy and bred a willingness to innovate and undertake new enterprises which carried through into the post-1900 period. But most of the changes represented permutations on a largely unchanging technological base and here there is a contrast with what happened in the 20th century. The investment in entirely new crops, such as cocoa and rubber, the development of tin mining, the revolution in transport first by the railway then by the motor lorry, involved technical innovation on a substantial scale as did the use of the sewing machine in the tailoring industry, the dough-break in bakery, new hand-tools in the furniture industry all of which grew rapidly in the inter-war and post-war periods. The most far-reaching of these innovations especially the new crops and transport produced an alteration in the structure of production in the economy such as the 19th century had not seen. The increasing spread of literacy among other skills supported this development by providing the wherewithal to extend the scale of organization of the market. At the same time many of the benefits from rising productivity were showered upon those who, by virtue of possessing such skills, were strategically placed to receive them. One can argue that apart from a few who cultivate the more valuable crops, and apart from the greater protection enjoyed from epidemic disease and outright famine, the present-day farmers are perhaps little better off than their 19th century predecessors. But there can be no doubt that Nigeria is richer in the material things of life than she was a hundred years ago and the larger portion of the increment is enjoyed by the educated élite, whether traditional or modern, in the various principal urban centres.

One of the principal factors that have created this growing gulf between rich and poor both socially and geographically has been the action of the government partly acting autonomously, partly reinforcing tendencies produced by purely economic and social forces as the government itself bent to the winds of political protest by the better organized. During the first half of the 20th century, apart from maintaining law and order and organizing the construction of transport facilities, the government did little to promote true economic development and on occasion did much to hinder it. Since 1950 this picture has somewhat changed but the tendency to support the better favoured has persisted as the government has taken a more decisive hand in promoting growth. All along country dwellers were hardly against the urban elite for they tended to regard them as their 'sons'. Apart from the fact of constant migration of young men for employment opportunities in the cities, the rest of the village population almost

invariably got sullenly resigned to fate and nursed the hope that their children would acquire Western education and join the fortunate few. Similarly the illiterate community in the urban centres tended to regard the literate workers as their 'brothers' and rejected the then dubious doctrine of separate identity which government stressed in its futile effort to convince the workers that a rise in worker's emoluments would place the non-salary earners at a disadvantage.<sup>147</sup> During the 1945 general strike for example, landlords, market women, villagers, school children and the community in general identified themselves with the aspirations of strikers to the extent that over-due rents were not demanded and people generously contributed to strikers' relief fund.<sup>148</sup> But the situation has definitely changed for as the Agbekoya rising of 1969 eloquently demonstrated, farmers currently feel that they have been discriminated against in the scheme of things and that the urban élite should no longer exploit them.<sup>149</sup> Although it now appears that they have been silenced by official decree, it may well become clear that only a rational programme of national economic integration and general welfare can prevent class confrontation in the years ahead.

147. *Papers on the General Strike of 1945*, Railway Workers Union Archives, Lagos.

148. See Dr N. Azikiwe's 'Inside Stuff', in the *West African Pilot*, 15 December 1945.

149. The name itself means farmers reject oppression.

## CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NIGERIA 1861-1960

G. O. OLUSANYA

Long before the British government acquired Lagos as a colony, they had worked out a system of colonial administration for their tropical dependencies. This was the crown colony system of administration already established and tried in the West Indies and in India. Consequently, when Lagos was acquired in 1861 a typical crown colony administration made its appearance only a year later. A Legislative Council made up of a Chief Justice, Colonial Secretary and a senior military officer in command of British forces within the colony, or any person lawfully discharging the functions of these officials was established in October, 1862.<sup>1</sup>

In imposing the crown colony system of administration on Nigeria or on any other non-white dependent territories for that matter, the British did not bother to reflect on whether this was in any way in agreement with the traditional system of government and administration in these territories. Imbued with an unjustified sense of superiority they considered it a sacred duty to impose their own system on the 'lesser breeds without law' and since Western education was a necessary prerequisite for effective participation in this system, the vast majority of Africans were from the outset excluded from participation in the central administration. Leadership in the African society at national level therefore passed from the hands of the indigenous rulers into those of Western educated Africans and since the repatriates were those who had earlier opportunity for Western education, it was not surprising that they and their children dominated for a period the Western-type politics and held the African membership of the Legislative Council until 1928. Thus, apart from the few indigenous rulers who made their appearance when the short-lived Nigerian Council was created in 1914, the African membership of the Legislative Council from 1872 to 1922 was wholly made up of repatriates. These were Captain James Pinson Labulo Davies, C.J. George, James Johnson, C.A. Sapara Williams, and Dr Obadiah Johnson and the Nigerian elected membership of that council from 1923 to the thirties was made up of J. Egerton Shyngle, E.O. Moore and Dr C.C. Adeniyi-Jones—all repatriates. This factor also led to political leadership being left to a small elitist group which was easily bought off before independence by the prospect of power and wealth.

1. CSO 1/1/1, H.S. Freeman to Newcastle, 9 October, 1962. See also T.N. Tamuno, *Nigeria and Elective Representation 1923-1947*, Heinemann, 1966, p. 67.

In March 1872, an important step in the evolution of the crown colony system of administration in Nigeria was taken when A.H. Porter, an English merchant in Lagos, was appointed a nominated unofficial member of the council. In December of the same year two other nominated unofficials were appointed. These were G. Hutchinson and Captain James Pinson Labulo Davies, who was the first African nominated unofficial member of the council. From 1872 until 1874 the composition of the council remained unchanged.

In the latter year a new development and a retrograde step as far as the Colony of Lagos was concerned took place. As a result of the reorganization of the West African territories, Lagos lost its separate existence and was merged with the Gold Coast and administered as part of it. As a result of this development, the Colony was not represented unofficially in the Legislative Council at Accra. This was a source of annoyance to the inhabitants of Lagos, both Europeans and Africans and their complaints were openly expressed in the newspaper.<sup>2</sup> Within the next two years (1876) there arose a strong agitation in Lagos for the separation of that territory from the Gold Coast. There also came into existence for the first time (1881) a demand for representative government.<sup>3</sup> Public meetings were held to voice these grievances and petitions embodying their demands were sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby.<sup>4</sup>

In 1886 their demand was satisfied when Lagos was separated from the Gold Coast and given a separate government of its own. The administration of the territory was now vested in a Governor, an Executive Council, and a Legislative Council. The Legislative Council was made up of the Colonial Secretary, the Queen's Advocate, the Chief Justice, the Treasurer and three unofficial members, Captain Hammond, Mr C.J. George, an African trader and Justice of the Peace, and Rev. James Johnson an African.<sup>5</sup> In 1892 a fourth member chosen to represent European commercial interests was added.

Now that the Colony of Lagos had been constituted into a separate territory, attention was directed towards a demand first made during the agitation for the separation of Lagos from the Gold Coast. This was the demand for elective representation. However, the administration was not keen on granting this request because it did not believe that the territory had advanced to the stage of being accorded the principle of election. However, to mitigate their opposition, it gradually increased the number of unofficial members of the Legislative Council until by 1900 there were six unofficial members in the council, while the number of officials remained the same. By 1902, however, the number of official members had also increased to six.

In 1906 Lagos Colony was merged with the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and the Legislative Council's competence was extended to embrace the whole of Lagos Colony and the Southern Nigeria Protectorate. It again increased in membership. It now consisted of ten official members and six unofficial members. The six unofficial

2. *The Lagos Observer*, 17 January, 1884.

3. See *Lagos Times*, 12 October, 1881, Tamuno, op. cit., p. 10.

4. *Lagos Times*, 9 January, 1884.

5. CO 147/55, Moloney to Granville, Conference, 19 April, 1886 and minutes.



members were C.A. Sapara Williams, Kitoyi Ajasa, Dr Obadiah Johnson (all Africans) and J. Miller, R.U. Little and A. Matheson.<sup>6</sup>

In 1914 the Northern and Southern Nigeria Protectorates were amalgamated. As a result of this development the jurisdiction of the Legislative Council was once again confined to the Lagos Colony and its membership reduced. This was because Lugard believed that the council was too restricted in membership to serve as an instrument of government for the whole country:

It is the cardinal principle of British colonial policy that the interest of a large native population shall not be subject to the will of a small European class or of a small minority of educated natives who have nothing in common with them and whose interests are often opposed to theirs.<sup>7</sup>

The truncated Legislative Council for Lagos was made up of seven ex-officio members, two Africans and two Europeans.<sup>8</sup> A new council, the Nigerian Council was created for the rest of the country. This council was made up of twenty-four officials and twelve unofficial members. There were six Europeans representing commerce, shipping, banking, mining, chambers of commerce and six Africans, consisting of the important chiefs of Northern and Southern Nigeria (amongst whom were Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto, the Alafin of Oyo, the Emir of Kano, Chief Dogho Numa) and educated Africans from Lagos and Calabar. The officials included the members of the Executive Councils, first class Residents, Political Secretaries and the Secretaries of the Northern and the Southern Provinces.<sup>9</sup>

The Nigerian Council was purely an advisory one. It had no Legislative power nor had it any control over finance: "No resolution passed by the Council shall have any legislative or executive authority, and the Governor shall not be required to give effect to any such resolution unless he thinks fit and is authorized to do so".<sup>10</sup> It was therefore merely a channel for public opinion and here too it was most ineffective. Moreover, most of the Nigerian traditional rulers could not speak English and therefore could not participate in discussions. Naturally, they found the proceedings of the council boring and as a result, they hardly attended its meetings.<sup>11</sup> Lugard himself was painfully aware of this and became frustrated with his own creation. Unwilling to admit defeat, he looked forward to the future by expressing the hope that it would be possible in some years to come to have educated chiefs capable of representing the vast masses of the population, but that until then they could only be represented by the Governor, by officials who were daily in touch with them and by a few representative chiefs.<sup>12</sup> The educated unofficial members themselves, both

6. *Southern Nigeria Bluebook*, 1906 and 1908.

7. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report by Sir Fredrick D. Lugard on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, and Administration*, 1912-1919, Cmd 468, p. 19.

8. *The Nigerian Blue Book*, 1914 and 1919.

9. In 1919 membership was reduced to 32—20 officials and 12 unofficials. The unofficial members in 1914 were Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto, the Alafin of Oyo, the Emir of Kano, Chief Dogho Numa representing Warri and Benin Rivers, Chief Richard Heinshaw of Calabar and Sapara Williams. Later the Shehu of Borno replaced Chief Dore Numa. See the *Nigerian Blue Book*, 1914.

10. *Nigerian Order-in-Council*, 1913, paragraph XVII, p. 241.

11. Sir Alan Burns, *Colonial Civil Servant*, London, 1949, p. 265.

12. *Proceedings, First Meeting of the Nigerian Council*, December 31, 1914.

Nigerians and British, could not play a meaningful role in such a purely advisory council and became frustrated by it. Because of this, a European unofficial member, Mr Robert McNeil, moved a motion that it should either be abolished or made more effective.<sup>13</sup> However, it continued in existence until Lugard's departure from Nigeria because of his unwillingness to accept that he had made a mistake.

In 1922, Sir Hugh Clifford succeeded Lord Lugard as Governor of Nigeria. Sir Hugh was a fluent speaker and an able debater. He could therefore not tolerate a 'dead' Legislative Council. Moreover, he was of the opinion that good administration demanded an awareness of public opinion and reactions,<sup>14</sup> and that the Nigerian Council as constituted was incapable of serving as an effective vehicle of public opinion. Such a man could have but little patience for a body as inactive as the Nigerian Council. Consequently, he abolished the council and substituted in this place a new Legislative Council whose jurisdiction covered the whole of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate. The North was to be governed by proclamations emanating from the Governor. However, the council had the power to discuss the estimates of the whole country. Clifford argued that he had to limit the competence of the Legislative Council to the South because he was faced with the practical problems posed by the sheer size of the country and the poor communication facilities,<sup>15</sup> the ethnic diversity and to a very minor extent the theoretical distinction between a colony and a protectorate.<sup>16</sup> He himself asserted that he did not consider that a council sitting at Lagos could be properly entrusted with the responsibility of legislating for the Muslim emirates, which were self-contained Native States, de facto governments of which are their respective Native Administration and that, in any case, the emirs would resent even nominal representation in that council.<sup>17</sup>

Clifford's arguments advanced above were most unconvincing. It is true that the country was very large and facilities for communication poor, but these were not insurmountable difficulties. The argument about ethnic diversity was equally pointless in that the North itself had the largest ethnic groups in the country and merging the North with the South would not have created a new problem, if indeed ethnic diversity was a problem under British colonial administration. As for the theoretical distinction between a colony and a protectorate, the argument possessed no validity at all. After all, it was only Lagos that was a Colony. All the other areas embraced by the competence of the Legislative Council were protected areas like Northern Nigeria. Moreover, his arguments that the Muslim emirates were self-contained states "the de facto governments of which are their respective Native Administration" equally applied to indigenous states in the South such as Benin and the Yoruba states. Finally, his argument that the emirs would resent even nominal representation was most unconvincing. If they were shown the value of it they would not resent it and it was certainly the duty of the administration to demonstrate the need for such a representation if it sincerely believed in it. Governor Benard Bourdillon did this very much later on and was successful. In any case, resentment by indigenous population against

13. *Address by the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, K.C.M.G. to the Nigerian Council*, December 29, 1920, p. 16.

14. See Tamuno, T.A., "Governor Clifford and Representative Government" in the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* IV, 1, 1967, p. 120.

15. CO 583/112 Clifford to Churchill, cm. 30 August, 1922.

16. See Tamuno, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

17. CO 583/100 Clifford to Churchill, cm. 26 March, 1921. See also Tamuno *op. cit.*, p. 124.

any measure had not deterred the British colonial administration from carrying out such a measure, unless it was likely to result in violence and bloodshed. This failure to integrate properly the North and the South was to be disastrous to the cause of national unity in later years.

The granting of a new Constitution in 1922 was significant for many reasons. The new Constitution embodied in it the principle of election. The new Legislative Council was to consist of 46 members—27 unofficials and 19 officials. Four of the unofficial members were to be elected by an adult male suffrage with residential qualifications of one year and a gross income of £100 per annum. Three of them were to represent Lagos and one Calabar. This was because these were considered to be the two major towns in Nigeria at this period that had enough educated elements who could be entrusted to use the franchise properly. Lagos was the capital and commercial headquarters of Nigeria while Calabar was the leading centre of trade and missionary activities for the Eastern part of the country.

The new Constitution with its elective principle stimulated the formation of political organizations in the country. The most important of these organizations was the Nigerian National Democratic Party. And with their formation a more effective vehicle for expressing grievances and aspirations was provided.

The elective principle embodied in the new Constitution was not won by Nigerians on a "platter of gold". The agitation in support of the demand for this principle had started as far back as the 19th century. The demand for elective principle was first made in 1881 during the agitation for the separation of Lagos from the Gold Coast Colony. No heed was paid to that demand by the administration. Nevertheless, the agitation gathered momentum and became all the stronger.

In 1920 the N.C.B.W.A. embracing the four West African territories was formed in Accra as a result of the initiative of Joseph Casely Hayford and Dr. Akinwande Savage of Nigeria.<sup>18</sup> The Congress came into existence partly as a result of the impact of Indian National Congress and the South African National Congress and partly as a result of the awakening political consciousness which accompanied that war. One of the major demands of that body was the grant of elective principle. After its inauguration in 1920 it sent a delegation to London to present a petition embodying its demands to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was treated in an off hand manner by the Colonial Secretary and returned without success. One of the reasons why the delegation was shabbily treated by the Colonial Secretary was the opposition of all West African Governors to the demands of the NCBWA. Guggisberg in a telegram to the Colonial Office repudiated the claims of the body as the representative of the peoples of British West Africa. He was irritated by the fact that the Congress had bypassed him and had appealed above his head directly to the Colonial Office. He therefore advised the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, not to commit himself to the Congress beyond promising to forward the memorial to him (Guggisberg) for recommendation after he should have consulted with the various communities on the

18. For detail history, See Kimble, D. *A Political History of Ghana*, O.U.P. 1963, pp. 374-403. Also G.O. Olusanya, "The Lagos Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*.

Gold Coast.<sup>19</sup> Sir Hugh Clifford was most virulent in his denunciation of the NCBWA and its delegation. He described their demands as "loose and gaseous talk emanating from a group of self-appointed, self-selected educated gentlemen who collectively styled themselves the National Congress of British West Africa". He observed that it would be mischievous to concede their demands as this would be "incompatible with that natural development of real national self-government which all patriots in Nigeria should combine to secure and maintain."<sup>20</sup>

The Colonial Office was also opposed to these demands for a number of reasons. First, it was of similar opinion with the West African Governors that the Congress represented no one except the educated elements of the barrister and trader class, and that in any case, West Africans were not ripe for representative institutions and it would be a cruel kindness to concede this.<sup>21</sup> It was further asserted that to have half-elected legislative councils would amount to abandoning financial control and would be disastrous.<sup>22</sup>

On the basis of the arguments of the Governors and the views of the Colonial Office officials, the delegation was informed that it was not representative of West African opinion and could not therefore be granted an interview.<sup>23</sup>

It is however surprising that Sir Hugh Clifford who had vehemently opposed the demands of the Congress recommended the granting of elective representation when setting up the new Legislative Council.<sup>24</sup> Clifford's action has baffled many a writer. The general explanation is that his attitude might have been influenced by the demand of the Congress, his opposition notwithstanding. If this was the case then it can be assumed that Clifford reacted the way he did to the demands of the Congress because it appealed over his head to the Colonial Office. The point has already been made that Clifford set great value on public opinion. He looked upon public opinion as a check upon arbitrary acts on the part of government officials and observed that Civil Servants in Nigeria were not subjected to such restraints which was to him a matter of regret.<sup>25</sup> He would therefore not normally be opposed to having a limited number of elected members in the Legislative Council as opposed to the demand of the Congress that half its membership be elected. However, as a man who prided himself on being sensitive to public opinion, he must have been piqued that he did not forestall the demands of the Congress and that the organization did not have the courtesy to consult him and forward its petition through him. The officials of the Colonial Office found his attitude inconsistent and puzzling. Harding, for instance, opposed Clifford's demand for elective representation on the ground that it was difficult to reconcile the proposal with Lord Milner's reply to the NCBWA delegation. However, because of Clifford's influence in the Colonial Office and the high regard in

19. CO 354/46/52395, 23 October, 1920, Guggisberg to the Colonial Office also CO 555/IND/9124, despatch No. 52395, 25 October, 1920.

20. *Address by the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford to the Nigerian Council, op. cit.*, December 29, 1920, p. 22.

21. CO 554/46/53561, 16 November, 1920.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. CO 558/100 Legislative Council: Reconstruction.

25. CO 583/111 Clifford to Churchill, conf. 7 July, 1922. See also Tamuno *op. cit.*, p. 120.



which he was held, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, granted his demand, though reluctantly.<sup>26</sup> It was thus that Nigeria led the way in the achievement of elective principle in Tropical Africa.

✱ The 1922 Constitution remained basically unchanged for 25 years. The only minor change was the appointment of two Africans and one European into the Council in 1942. However, the outbreak of the Second World War accelerated the pace of political and constitutional developments to an extent unimaginable in the inter-war years.

The outbreak of the Second World War, the close involvement of Nigeria in that War as a result of the closure of the Mediterranean route to the Allies when Italy joined the Axis Power—a development that turned West Africa into a strategic staging point for the Allied forces, and the allied propaganda which emphasized democracy and the right of all peoples to choose whatever forms of government they would like to be under, stimulated considerably political awakening in the country.<sup>27</sup> As a result, British policies and practices were subject to critical scrutiny and to constant and virulent criticisms. The old constitution under which the country had been governed for 25 years came up constantly for strong criticisms.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the British themselves, partly as a result of the spontaneous help offered by the colonial peoples and the realization that the war had let loose forces that could not be contained without some political concessions and partly as a result of the indifference with which the native population of Singapore and Malaya reacted to British misfortunes and the persistent criticisms of the Americans of British colonial policy and practices, were convinced that a more radical approach to colonial problems was needed.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, they were more prepared to grant political and constitutional concessions to the colonial nationalists.

✱ In Nigeria itself the political awakening stimulated by the war brought into existence a political organization which was to play a very important role in the history of the country. This was the NCNC, formed mainly as a result of the initiative of the King's College branch of the Nigerian Union of Students, in August 1944. The emergence of this organization heralded an era of more decisive battle with the colonial administration.

The colonial administration was sensitive to the early indications of the 'wind of change' and decided to take time by the forelock. The Governor of Nigeria at the outbreak of the war, Sir Benard Bourdillon, had already been preparing a new Constitution but as he retired in 1944, it was left to the successor, Sir Arthur Richards, to put finishing touches to it. In December 1944 Sir Arthur published the new constitutional proposals which according to him were designed to promote the unity of Nigeria, to

26. CO 63185/21 Nigeria, The Right Honourable Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of Nigeria.

27. For greater detail see J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria—Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley, 1960 chapter entitled "Impact of World War II" see also my book entitled *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria*, Evans, 1973.

28. See for instance, *West African Pilot*, 2nd March, 1940.

29. See G.O. Olusanya, *The Impact of the Second World War on Nigeria's Political Evolution*, University of Toronto, Ph.D. Thesis, 1964, particularly chapter III entitled "Factors Making for Change in British Colonial Policy."



provide adequately within that unity for the diverse elements which make up the country, and to secure greater participation by Africans of their own affairs.<sup>30</sup> Under the proposals, a new Legislative Council whose jurisdiction was to cover the whole country was established. The new Council was enlarged both in membership and scope. There were to be 41 members. 28 of these were to be unofficial members. Of the latter number four would be elected by Lagos and Calabar on a franchise of £10 and £20 respectively were to be selected by the Regional Councils to be set up in each Region under the new constitution. The remaining four members were to represent banking, shipping and commerce. The Regional Councils were to consist of members elected by the Native Authorities. This was an ingenious attempt to link the indirect rule system of administration to the Crown Colony System. These Councils were to possess no legislative powers and only a limited financial power. In the North House of Chiefs to be presided over by the Chief Commissioner was created along with the Regional Council. All first class chiefs were to be members by right. The Northern House of Assembly was to consist of 19 officials and 20 unofficial members. The Eastern and Western Regional Councils were to be made up of 13 officials and 14 unofficials in the case of the former and 14 officials and 15 unofficial members in the case of the latter.

Its defects notwithstanding, and these are many, the Richards Constitution was indeed a landmark in the constitutional development of Nigeria. It brought together for the first time since 1923 Northern and Southern Nigeria, and thus paved the way for Nigerian unity. Moreover, it gave the unofficial members a majority in the Legislative Council and widened the basis of representation. Despite all this and the fact that it was intended to promote the policy of "keeping one step before the public opinion"<sup>31</sup> it was received with hostility by the Nigerian nationalists.

There are many reasons for this. First, although Bourdillon had promised Nigerians during his tenure of office as Governor that they would be properly consulted before a new constitution was designed for the country, this promise was not carried out by his successor, Sir Arthur Richards. Consequently, Nigerians regarded the Constitution as an imposition. This was certainly an error on the part of Sir Arthur for consultation would have enabled Nigerians or at least the articulate minority to express their views on the proposals and this might have made possible an agreement embodying concessions on both sides and thereby have prevented the open confrontation that came with the publication of the proposals. Richards' attitude in this respect was also condemned by Bourdillon, his predecessor. Sir Bernard saw and also said that the public ought to have been consulted. He observed that there were three essentials in any constitutional organization. First, it must not be a machinery of purely alien manufacture for it would break down unless those who were to work it can feel familiar with it and that it was something of their own. Second, it must not be 'a fossil excavated from some museum and polished up for the occasion'. He emphasised that it must be a living organism, capable of growth and adaptation to new circumstances.

30. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Proposals for the Revision of the Constitution of Nigeria*, Cmd 6599, London HMSO, 1945, (hereafter cited as Cmd 6599).

31. Sir Bernard Bourdillon, GCMG, KBE, "Nigeria's New Constitution", *United Empire*, Vol. XXXVII, 1946, p. 80.

and suggested it can only be that if the people whom it concerns have a considerable say in its formation, and if it is suited to the soil in which it is intended to grow.<sup>32</sup> Thirdly, many Nigerians did not believe that the constitution was in any way a significant advance over the 1923 Constitution. In the first instance, it aimed at giving Nigeria greater participation in the discussion of their own affairs. What Nigerian leaders wanted was not 'greater discussion' but greater participation in the whole process of government and administration.

Moreover, the nationalists were opposed to the principle of nomination which they regarded as undemocratic. They maintained that nominated members could not truly be described as representatives of the people and that their obligation to the Governor, who nominated them, prevented them from representing the public truly and effectively.

Opposition was also expressed against the non-extension of the principle of representation conceded as far back as 1923. The new constitution, like the 1923 Constitution, provided for only 4 elected members. Certainly by 1944 there had developed other towns in Nigeria with enough educated Africans who could exercise the franchise intelligently if indeed western education is an imperative prerequisite, which it is not. Western education had nothing to do with intelligent use of the franchise. Each man whether educated or not knows his interest and it is this that provides a guide for him in exercising his vote. The colonial administration had no sound reason for continuing to limit the elective principle to Lagos and Calabar.

Nigerian leaders were also irritated by the way in which the constitutional proposals were introduced and rushed through both the Nigeria Legislative Council and British Parliament. It was sprung on the African members without notice. Consequently, they could not criticize the proposals effectively. This was made very clear by Dr. Olusoga, who opposed the proposals on the ground that they (African members) had not been given the opportunity of discussing the proposals with the people they represented. The Governor explained the lack of consultation by stating that the proposals had to be hurried through the Council to enable the British Parliament to discuss and pass it before its dissolution for the General Election of that year. In the event, the way the constitutional proposals were treated in the House of Commons left a great deal to be desired. The new proposals were only mentioned during the debate on the motion for adjournment on November 19, 1945,<sup>33</sup> and to a House that was virtually empty. The whole discussion on it took only twenty-nine minutes. The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Arthur Creech Jones, was himself so disappointed at the lack of interest shown by members of Parliament in the new proposals that he stated: "I regret that so little opportunity exists for adequate discussion of these matters which are of immense importance to colonial peoples".<sup>34</sup> This apparent lack of interest of the members of the British Parliament was very disillusioning to the Nigerian nationalist leaders one of whom aptly observed as follows:

It is indeed disturbing and augurs ill for the future, that a body which always found time to debate the Greek Question, for instance, should dismiss with such

32. Bourdillon, op. cit., pp. 76-80.

33. Hansard, Fifth Series, Vol. 416, November 19-December 7, 1945, p. 159.

34. Ibid., pp. 162-163.

an apparent show of unconcern what amounts to a landmark in the political destiny of about twenty-five million loyal subjects. There is a lesson which the Mother Parliament has taught: open rebellion and acts of violence command her attention more than loyalty and constitutional methods. It is a lesson which it will be wise not to force on Nigeria.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, some of the Nigerian leaders were opposed to the inclusion of chiefs as unofficial members. This was because they regarded them as puppets of the administration and as therefore incapable of effectively representing the interests of the people. The very fact that many of the obas enthusiastically accepted the new constitution and hailed it as a significant landmark helped to confirm this belief. For example, the Oba of Benin warmly declared that 'the Richards political and constitutional reform for Nigeria is without mincing words the best that Nigeria can have at the present.'<sup>36</sup>

But more important was the belief passionately held by the nationalists that the Richards' Constitution was an example *par excellence* of the policy of *divide et impera*.<sup>37</sup> It is indeed difficult to prove this belief. It is true that a number of British officials in Northern Nigeria were openly critical of the constitutional proposals on the ground that it did not provide adequately for the differences between the North and the South and even went to the extent of advocating the separation of the North from the South,<sup>38</sup> but their attitude and action did not seem to have influenced the proposals. There are enough reasons for our stand on this question. First Sir Bernard Bourdillon, the architect of the new constitution was one of those few Governors who actively worked for the unity of the country. He was untiring in his efforts at convincing the Northerners of the desirability of maintaining the unity of the country and he was openly critical of those British officers who actively fostered disunity in the country.<sup>39</sup> He explained why a constitution aimed at the unity of the country should have as one of its major features the establishment of three Regional Councils in each of the three administrative regions into which the country was divided. First, the inability of many of the Northerners to speak English, their unfamiliarity with parliamentary procedures (as the north was still governed by proclamations) would not only turn them into 'sleeping members' but might lead to friction between them and the educated southerners. Secondly, a single unitary body would be too large and would be time-wasting. Finally, he was of the opinion that since the unit of political consciousness was still the native authority, the establishment of the regional councils was to promote a wider consciousness of a regional basis which he envisaged would be the necessary pre-requisite for the growth of national consciousness.<sup>40</sup>

35. Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, London, 1946, p. 119.

36. *WAP*, March 22, 1945.

37. It is interesting to note that Azikiwe and the NCNC themselves advocated federalism and in a memorandum proposed that the Central Legislative should deal with defence, foreign affairs and the currency and all other matters left to the Regional level. See NCNC, *Memorandum on the New Constitution of Nigeria*, Lagos, 1945.

38. Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British African Territories*, Part II, London, 1941, p. 4.

39. Bourdillon, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

40. Bourdillon, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Indeed the new constitution with its regionalism seemed to be the most logical one in view of the divisions within the country.<sup>41</sup> There was division not only between the North and the South but between the East and the West. This division had become clear since the split in the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1941. That development had brought into the open the ethnic divisions in the country. It was this disunity that delayed the formation of a new and active national organization despite the considerable awakening of political consciousness during the war until the formation of the NCNC in August, 1944, mainly as a result of the initiative of the Nigerian Union of students. Sir Arthur Richards as a practical administrator was conscious of this disunity and took it into consideration in devising the new constitution.<sup>42</sup> Indeed the greatest argument against the belief that the new constitution was a perfect example of the policy of divide and rule was that there was no provision of the constitution that could justify the belief. The three regions established by the Constitution were administrative and not political regions and in any case, they were not new. They had existed since 1939 when the former Southern Nigeria Protectorate was split into Eastern and Western Provinces each with its own Lieutenant-Governor. Furthermore, they were not even made permanent for provision was inserted in the Constitution whereby further regions could be created from the existing ones if administrative needs warranted it. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that the new constitution deliberately promoted the unity of Nigeria. For the first time since the dissolution of the lifeless Nigerian Council, the two halves of the country were brought together in a Legislative Council whose competence was nationwide. Thus the Richards Constitution did not divide the country. What it attempted to do was to provide unity in diversity. It was the Nigerians themselves who made the Regions created for administrative reasons political and permanent when they were called upon to work out a constitution for their country in 1950/51. Thus one cannot but agree with Arikpo that it was the Nigerians themselves who created the schisms that almost destroyed their country.<sup>43</sup>

The new constitution was not to come into operation until 1947 and this gave the nationalists the opportunity to continue their opposition to it. The NCNC, the only active political organization during this period, therefore decided to carry the struggle against the new constitution to the metropolitan country. Consequently, it organised a country-wide tour with two main objectives—to explain its position to the public and to collect money to send a delegation to London to protest against the new constitution. Its tour of the country was financially successful. A total sum of £14,000 was collected.<sup>44</sup> A petition embodying the various views already expressed against the constitution was drawn up for presentation, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The delegation which was led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe failed to achieve its objectives. Its members were advised by the Secretary of State to return home and cooperate in working the new constitution.

41. *Legislative Council Debates*, March 24, 1947, p. 236 & 238; also *West African Pilot*, November 4, 1943.

42. *Legislative Council Debates*, March 20, 1947, pp. 6-8.

43. Okoi Arikpo, *The Development of Modern Nigeria*, 1967, p. 55.

44. N. Azikiwe: *Development of Political Parties in Nigeria*, p. 14.



The Colonial Secretary's reaction to the delegation can be easily explained. First, he was not likely to yield so easily to pressure. The nationalist leaders had believed that since the Labour Party was in power, their demands could be met with little pressure. Their attitude was indeed naive. Though the Labour Party was committed to granting freedom to colonial peoples, nevertheless, it firmly believed that such a step should be gradual and well planned so that the particular territory concerned could be fully prepared before achieving such an objective. Secondly, the new Constitution had not even come into operation and so it had not been given the chance it deserved. But of greater importance was that the delegation discredited itself by quarrelling over the money allocated to it for the mission. There were accusations and counter accusations of embezzlement amongst the delegates. Such irresponsibility, of course, did not endear the delegation to the Colonial Office. Such people could not be trusted with substantial power.

Despite its failure, the delegation was received back with great warmth by Nigerians. The NCNC leaders were so frustrated with the failure of the delegation that its three elected members into the Legislative Council decided not to take their seats. This was reconsidered and they finally took their seats in March 1948. After this the agitation against the new Constitution gradually petered out.

However, it would be a mistake to believe that the delegation did not have any impact on planning in the Colonial Office and on the British public.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the Nigerian Administration, learning from the Gold Coast experience<sup>46</sup> decided to anticipate such a development in Nigeria. This was made very clear by Sir Hugh Foot (now Lord Canadon) who was the Chief Secretary, to the Nigerian Government at this period when he stated:

We reviewed the whole political situation: we took into account the disorders and the changes which had recently taken place in what was then the Gold Coast. We came to the conclusion that we must at once take a new initiative. The Legislative Council was to meet in August. That seemed to be the best time to make an announcement. A recommendation was made by telegram to the Colonial Office. There was a quick reply.<sup>47</sup>

It was this initiative taken by the administration that was mainly responsible for the destruction of the Richards Constitution and the ushering in of what was to be popularly known as the Macpherson Constitution. In working out the new Constitution the administration was careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past. One of the major reasons why Nigerian nationalists opposed the Richards Constitution was that it was an imposition. The new Governor, Sir John Macpherson, decided to avoid such a mistake. In March 1949, a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was set up to examine the problems of introducing a new Constitution. The Committee agreed that there should be a wide measure of consultation with the people starting from the

45. See *The Economist*, July 26, 1947, p. 41.

46. There was a riot in the Gold Coast in 1948 which started with the ex-servicemen's march of protest exploited by the politicians to achieve the objective. See Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*. O.U.P., 1964. See Chapter entitled 'The Early Years, 1946-51'.

47. Hugh Foot, *A Start in Freedom*, London, 1964.



village level. This was to be followed by a General Conference made up of all unofficial members of the Legislative Council and representatives of each Regional Council. The committee also drew up a series of recommendations to be laid before an All-Nigeria Constitutional Conference. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that all interested bodies should be called upon to submit memoranda on constitutional revision to the government. Questions were drawn up to be answered by the Native Authorities, Provincial and Regional Authorities so as to ascertain their views on the subject. Amongst the questions were:

- (a) Do we wish to see a fully centralized system with all the legislative and executive power concentrated at the Centre, or do we wish to develop a federal system under which each different region of the country would exercise a measure of internal autonomy?
- (b) If we favour a federal system, should we return to the existing Regions with some modifications of existing regional boundaries, or should we form regions on some new basis such as the many linguistic groups in Nigeria?

After these questions had been answered, Regional Conferences met at Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna respectively. All the Regional Conferences agreed on a federal system of government with slight modifications. The Western Regional Conference recommended a federal government made up of all states formed on ethnic and/or linguistic basis, but also that there should be for the time being three states based on the existing regions. The Eastern Regional Conference recommended a Central Legislature and Regional Legislatures which would merely exercise such powers that the Central Legislature might delegate, in short, it wanted a strong central government. Moreover, the West and East recommended the setting up of a Central Legislature made up mainly of elected members and a limited number of officials, and a Central Executive Council with a majority of elected members. This Council would be vested with ministerial powers. While the North agreed with the first recommendation, it suggested in place of the second a purely advisory central council. In the Regions, the East and West wanted Executive Councils with a Nigerian majority, and a ministerial system. The North recommended that the Chief Commissioner should continue to exercise executive powers but to be advised in the discharge of his duties by a purely advisory Regional Executive Council made up of officials. These recommendations revealed the gap in their views which in itself was a product of uneven Constitutional development. The recommendations of the Regional Conferences were submitted to a Constitutional Drafting Committee headed by the Chief Secretary, Sir Hugh Foot, which in turn drew up a series of recommendations.

An all-Nigeria Constitutional Conference was then summoned. This met in Ibadan in January 1950 under the Chairmanship of the Attorney-General, Sir Gerald Howe. The Conference drew up a series of recommendations, mainly that a federal system consisting of the three existing Regions should be set up and Lagos be created an independent municipality. The existing Regions were to cease to be administrative regions. They were to be political regions with powers to pass legislation which would be effective within their own boundaries. Such legislation should not be subject to the approval of the Central House but should however be laid before that House and might be debated on the proposal of the Governor-in-Council. In case of disagreement between the Regional Houses and the House of Representatives over legislations it was

suggested that no regional legislation opposed by a majority of all members of the House of Representatives present should take effect.

➤ This Conference was very significant in that it revealed the divisions between the North and South which were to continue to plague Nigerian politics and hinder national unity even in the post-independence period. The Northern delegation insisted on having half the seats in the House of Representatives on the ground that the North contained about half the population of the whole country. The delegation also demanded that revenue derived from taxation should be allocated to the Regions on per capita basis and threatened that the North would revert to the 1914 situation if not granted the demands. The Eastern and Western delegations were opposed to the North having half the seats in the House as this would mean that the North would perpetually control the Centre. This led to dispute and deadlock which could not be resolved by the Conference. There were disagreements in other areas too. While the Eastern and Western representatives desired a Cabinet government, the Northern representatives were opposed to any form of 'Cabinet' responsibility whether in the Regions or in the Centre. The North also remained unyielding over its stand that there should be no boundary revisions. This last question was left to the discretion of the Governor.<sup>48</sup> There were also conflicts over a number of other important issues. The Eastern delegation, for example, was opposed to the electoral College system, the creation of House of Chiefs in the North and West, and representation of vested interests. It also opposed the division of Nigeria into three Regions and urged instead that the country be split into states based on ethnic groups so as to resolve the problems of the minorities and disunity. It advocated universal adult suffrage in place of taxpayers' suffrage and was opposed to the provision that only Northern Nigerian males of 25 and over and resident in the Region for three years should be qualified for election into the Northern Regional House of Assembly. Such a provision would make it impossible for any non-northerner to contest election to the House. These views of the delegation were embodied in a minority report. The Western delegation was opposed to the exclusion of Lagos from the Western Region.

A Select Committee of the Legislative Council then examined the recommendations but failed to resolve the differences. Its own recommendations were submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the problem of regional representation unsolved. The other recommendations were approved with some minor modifications but the Colonial Secretary referred back to the Select Committee the problem of regional representation at the Centre.

The Committee then met and recommended a House of Representatives to consist of 148 elected members half of whom should be from the North. There were to be six other members to represent interest not adequately represented.<sup>49</sup> These recommendations were approved by the Legislative Council.

The 1951 Constitution as finally worked out possessed the following features: First a Central Legislature, (to be called the House of Representatives). This was to be made up of 148 members, 136 of whom were to be elected by the Nigerian members of the

48. Government of Nigeria, *Proceedings of the General Conference on the Review of the Constitution*, January, 1950, p. 217.

49. *Legislative Council Debates*, September 6, 1950, pp. 190-191.

Regional Legislatures 68 from the Northern House and 34 each from the Eastern and Western Regional Houses of Assembly. Six members would be appointed by the Governor to represent interests which in his opinion were not adequately represented while the other six would be ex-officio members namely: the three Lieutenant-Governors, the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney-General. Secondly, there was to be established a Council of Ministers charged with the responsibility of formulating policies and directing executive actions. The Council was to be headed by the Governor and was to consist in addition to him six official members charged with responsibilities over external relations, defence, civil service, legal and financial matters and 12 Nigerian ministers (four from each Region but to be drawn from among the members of the House of Representatives). Three of the 12 ministers would be without portfolio. The ministers, however, were not political or executive heads of government department. Each was given responsibility over a group of subjects and each was responsible for initiating the discussion of policy in the Council, and introducing into the House of Representatives, and answering questions on, matters affecting his subject or group of subjects. He was to work in cooperation with the head of departments in order to ensure that decisions taken by the Council were properly executed.

The House of Representatives had limited powers. For instance, it had no powers over bills relating to public revenue and the public service. These were subjected to the Governors' reserved powers. In addition, the Governor possessed wide reserved powers. Section 186 of the Order-in-Council empowered the Governor to use his reserved powers to pass into law any Bill he might consider to be in the interest of public order and good government even if the House of Representatives failed to pass such a Bill. Moreover, a Bill passed by the House of Representatives and assented to by the Governor could be disallowed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Thus, the 1951 Constitution failed to give Nigeria full responsible government.

In the Regions, the existing regional councils were constituted into Houses of Assembly whose members were selected through the electoral colleges although the members of the colleges had to be elected directly. The Regions now became political entities and were vested with executive and Legislative powers. Each Region was given the powers to make laws for the peace, order and good government of its area of jurisdiction. A number of subjects were allocated to the regions. These included forestry, fisheries, agriculture, animal health, local ministries cooperative societies, social welfare, education, regional public work, town and community planning, land, local government, native courts, health, regional finance and any other matter within the competence of the Regional Legislature.

In the North and West, two Houses were set up—Houses of Assembly and Houses of Chiefs. The Northern House of Assembly consisted of a President, four officials members and such special members as might be appointed to represent interests or communities, not otherwise adequately represented. The House of Chiefs was made up of the Lieutenant-Governor as the President, three official members, and first class chiefs and thirty-seven other chiefs and an adviser on Muslim law. The Western House of Assembly was composed of a President, four officials, eighty elected members and special members to represent interest or communities which in the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor were not otherwise adequately represented provided that the

number of such members should not at any time exceed three, while the House of Chiefs was made up of Lieutenant-Governor as the President, three official members and such Head Chiefs and other chiefs not exceeding 50.

There was only a House of Assembly in the Eastern Region as the Chieftaincy institution was not as well-developed as in the other two Regions. The Eastern House of Assembly consisted of the Lieutenant-Governor as President, five officials, 80 elected and three special members to represent interests or communities not adequately represented in the House.

All bills passed by the regional legislatures were to be sent to the Governor who could object to any such Bills if it dealt with any matter with respect to which the Regional legislatures had no power or if it was not consistent with the general interests of Nigeria or with any obligations of Nigeria under treaty or agreement or any direction given under Section 121 of the Order-in-Council.<sup>50</sup> Section 121 (i) reads: The Governor may from time to time give to the Lieutenant-Governor such directions with respect to the exercise of the executive authority of the Region as he may decide are desirable and in particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, may give such directions for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the provision of Section 120 of this Order.

In very many ways the 1951 Constitution failed to satisfy the political leaders even though it was home made. This was because it was a compromise, and compromises hardly satisfy. The constitution came under attack from the nationalist leaders in the South. Dr. Azikiwe criticized various aspects of it. He was strongly opposed to the representation of special interests and indirect system of election to the legislature. He deplored the fact that the Constitution did not provide adequately for the ethnic differences in the country. He would prefer the division of the country along an ethnic and or linguistic basis, all to be knit together by a strong central government. Finally, he would prefer Houses of Chiefs that were purely advisory in nature if they were ever to be established at all.<sup>51</sup>

Chief Awolowo was equally critical of the new Constitution, particularly the imbalance that would be created by having three unequal regions knit together by a strong central legislature. He therefore asserted that the Constitution failed to satisfy the three criteria by which a federal constitution should be judged and concluded that the constitution was therefore 'a wretched compromise between federalism and unitarianism'.<sup>52</sup>

Its defects notwithstanding, the 1951 Constitution was indeed an important landmark in the history of Nigeria. This was the first time Nigerians had been called upon to work out their own constitution and so the new Constitution provided them with the necessary training in the art of constitution-making. Secondly, it was sufficiently attractive to stimulate the formation of political parties and thereby marked the effective beginning of the development of political parties. Finally, and most unhappily, it ushered in an era of ethnic nationalism and regional divisions. This was

50. *The Nigeria (Constitution) Order-in-Council*, 1951, Section 96.

51. *WAP*, June 21, 1951.

52. O. Awolowo: *AWO—An Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, O.U.P., 1960, p. 179.



because there emerged as a result of the new Constitution, two important political parties based on the regional divisions of the country since each Region was largely enough to provide adequate base for each party. These two parties were the Action Group and the Northern Peoples Congress.

In retrospect, the 1951 Constitution was such that its existence was bound to be short-lived. As has clearly been pointed out, the Constitution in itself was a compromise between the competing views of the various political leaders in the country. This fact might not have worked against the Constitution were it not for the fact that ethnic nationalism was mounting in the country and with its growth, the possibility of a tightly-knit constitution, surviving for long was remote. Secondly, the different pace of development in the country was not conducive to the Constitution enjoying a long existence. The Southern political leaders were impatient for further progress while the Northern leaders felt that too much progress had already been made and that the time had come to rest and be thankful. So widely opposed views were hardly capable of being harmonised. But more important was the fact that there was no desire on the part of Nigerian leaders to ensure the successful operation of the Constitution. The result was that the Constitution was subjected to a series of crises from which it did not recover.

The elections to the new regional Houses of Assembly and Chiefs under the new Constitution took place between August and December 1951. These elections revealed the regional divisions which were to continue to plague all attempts at political unity. The NPC won in the North, the Action Group in the West, and the NCNC in the East. The regional elections were followed by elections into the House of Representatives in July 1952. According to the constitutional arrangements, members of the Central House were to be elected by the Regional Houses from amongst their members. The final settlement on the question of the status of Lagos during the working out of the new Constitution was that it should be part of the Western Region. It was given five seats in the Western Regional House in recognition of its importance as federal capital. The five members were therefore members of the Western House of Assembly. Dr. Azikiwe decided to contest the election in Lagos because Lagos was his place of residence and the headquarters of his business as well as his political activities. Azikiwe and the NCNC were already aware that a Western Regional House dominated by the AG would be unwilling to elect him into the central legislature. Consequently, an agreement was reached amongst the five elected NCNC members for Lagos that three of them should refuse to stand election into the Central Legislature so that Azikiwe would be automatically elected along with the only remaining NCNC Lagos member into that House, as Lagos under the Constitution had to have two of its elected members in the Central Legislature. At the last moment, two of the NCNC members who had agreed to step down, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin and Dr. Ibiyinka Olorun-Nimbe, refused to do so. Consequently, Azikiwe was defeated in his bid to enter the House of Representatives.

Although the AG had displayed ethnic chauvinism in its treatment of Azikiwe, the way in which he himself reacted to the development was not in keeping with his political maturity. He and his party began to look for different scapegoats on which to blame his failure. They blamed it on the weakness in the Constitution rather than on the hostility of the AG. They therefore sought to destroy the Constitution to achieve



revenge. The Eastern Regional representatives threatened to boycott the Central House because their President failed to get in there. As nobody paid any attention to their protests they finally agreed to cooperate in working the constitution, but such a cooperation could only be half-hearted. Next, Azikiwe decided to resign from the Western Regional House of Assembly and proceed to his own Region. There was no means by which he could get into the Eastern Regional House since the elections were all over. Various devices were tried. The NCNC demanded that all the Ministers in the Eastern Regional Government should resign so that the President, Azikiwe, could put up a proposal for reshuffling the Cabinet. They, of course, refused and were expelled from the party. The NCNC central ministers were also requested to refuse participation in the activities of the Central Executive Council. They also refused and were expelled for disloyalty. Both the expelled regional Ministers and the central ones then combined to form a party of their own called the United National Independence Party.

On February 2, 1953, the NCNC controlled Eastern House of Assembly moved a vote of no confidence in the regional ministers. The motion was carried by 60 votes to 13. The ministers refused to resign their seats on constitutional grounds. The votes were taken not by secret ballot but by a show of hand, and this was a violation of Section 133 (b) of the Order-in-Council 1951 which stipulated that the revocation of the appointment of any minister could only be decided by secret ballot. However, the NCNC realizing that it might not win the required two-third votes, decided not to comply with this provision. Their fear was indeed justified for eleven of those who had supported the vote of no confidence later resigned from the party. Since the party could not achieve its objective in this manner it decided to become obstructive by defeating all the bills brought into the House. Consequently, an impasse was reached; and the Governor was forced to use his reserved powers to pass the appropriation bill. This situation persisted for three months and the Lieutenant-Governor again had to use his reserved power to dissolve the House on May 6, 1953. In the new elections that followed Azikiwe contested and won, and with his entry into the House and his appointment as Premier the attempts by the NCNC to destroy the Constitution ceased.

Meanwhile, the Constitution received a blow from another quarter. In March 1953, Chief Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group member of the House of Representatives, moved a motion that the House should accept as its primary objective the attainment of self-government in 1956.<sup>53</sup> The Northerners strongly opposed this motion because they were convinced that they were not ready for independence and that to achieve independence as early as that would be inviting the domination of the North by the South. Consequently, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and the NPC leader, moved an amendment. He suggested that the phrase 'as soon as practicable' be substituted for 1956. He emphasized that the North was not ready for independence and therefore could not be committed to a specific date. He asserted that national unity was still lacking and that the North would be at a disadvantage in contrast to the South if independence were to be achieved by 1956. He therefore concluded that for the North to accept such a commitment would amount to suicide. This disagreement

53. Federal Government of Nigeria, House of Representatives, *Official Report of Debates*, March 31, 1953, p. 985.

led to a sharp division in the House between the North and the South, as a result of which the Western and Eastern Regional members of the House staged a walk-out and the four AG members of the Cabinet resigned.

The Northerners were greatly irritated by the attitude and behaviour of the Southern legislators. But to make matters worse, the Northern legislators were subjected to ridicule by the Lagos crowd, as they left the House of Representatives which called them various names—"Stooges", "Kolanut men", "His Majesty's Voice". This incident so angered and frustrated the Northerners that they were convinced that it was impossible to work with the Southerners. They therefore put forward a proposal—the Eight Point Programme—which if accepted would have almost amounted to a secession of the North, but were persuaded to drop it by the colonial administration.

Northern bitterness against the South might have died down gradually were it not for the constant and virulent press campaign from the South. Worse still, the Action Group decided to go on what it described as "an educational tour" of the North to explain the crisis over the self-government motion. This was an unwise decision considering the state of North-South relations. Moreover, they chose Kano as one of the centres for their tour. Kano had a large population of Southerners and at the same time was mainly a muslim area. This was very provocative. Furthermore, the Southern Press used the occasion of the tour to launch another attack on the Northern leaders.<sup>54</sup>

The arrival of the AG delegation in Kano led to a series of riots which lasted four days resulting in the death of 50 people with over 200 wounded.<sup>55</sup> This, of course, worsened further the relationship between the North and the South and thereby made the smooth working of the 1951 Constitution impossible. Consequently, the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, informed the British House of Commons on May 20, 1953 that recent events in Nigeria had shown that it was impossible for the three Regions of Nigeria to work effectively in a federation so closely knit as the existing one, and that the British government would invite representatives from each of the Regions to visit London to discuss the redrafting of the Nigerian Constitution and that the Constitution would be redrawn in such a way as to provide for greater regional autonomy and for the removal of the powers of intervention of the centre in matters which would be placed within regional competence.<sup>56</sup>

In keeping with the announcement of the Colonial Secretary, another Constitutional Conference was summoned in July 1953 to work out a new Constitution for the country. The Conference met from July to August 1953. The new Constitution worked out for the country established a federal system of government. The Governor became the Governor-General and the Lieutenant-Governors became Governors.<sup>57</sup> The

54. Report on Kano Disturbances, p. 6; also *Daily Times*, May 16, 1953.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

56. Recalling the 1954 Constitutional Conference Lord Chandos (then Oliver Lyttleton) stated: "It was clear that Nigeria, if it was to be a nation, must be a federation, with as few subjects reserved for the Central Government as would preserve national unity". See the *Memoirs of Lord Chandos*, p. 419.

57. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report by the Conference on the Nigerian Constitution held in London, July and August, 1953*, Cmd 8934. (Hereafter cited as Cmd. 8934).

centre was assigned 168 subjects, amongst which were external affairs, immigration and emigration, defence, atomic energy, foreign and inter-regional trade, copyrights, patents, trade marks, customs, foreign exchange, currency, public debt, national loans and higher education institutions. A concurrent list of subjects was drawn up with the provision that in case of conflict, the decision of the central legislature should prevail. This included statistics, surveys, labour, welfare regulations, higher education unless financed from Central funds, insurance, agricultural research, industrial development and power, national parks, buildings and monuments, promotion of tourism, commissions of enquiry and guaranture.

At the centre a unicameral legislature was set up made up of 184 elected members, 94 of whom were to come from the North and 42 each from the Western and Eastern Regions, two from Lagos and 6 from the Southern Cameroons. The number of ex-officio members of the Federal House was reduced from six to three—the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney-General. A Council of Ministers composed of 9 members three from each Region was established. Six of the nine ministers were to hold portfolios. Unlike the 1951 Constitution under which three Ministers each were selected from each Region on the recommendation of the Regional House of Assembly, the Ministers were to be appointed by the Governor-General from the Federal Legislature on the recommendation of the leader having an overall majority in the House or, if no party had such a majority, of the leaders in the Federal Legislature of the majority parties from each Region. This was certainly a considerable improvement. Under the 1951 arrangement it was difficult to establish a principle of collective responsibility or promote the spirit of national unity because the Ministers considered themselves representatives of the respective Regions and placed the interests of their Regions over and above national interests in their approach to problems. This was in fact one of the major factors responsible for the short existence of the 1951 Constitution. Regional Governors also ceased to be members of the Federal Council of Ministers.

Again, under the 1951 Constitution when members of the Federal House were elected by the Regional Houses, federal elections were separated from the regional ones. There was, however, no uniformity in electoral procedures as the North continued to use the Electoral College System although the new College was to be separated from the old, while elections into the Eastern and Western Houses were to be direct. Again to avoid the mistakes of the past, it was laid down that no members of the Regional Legislatures should be members of the Federal Legislature. However, members of the Regional Houses of Assembly were to be allowed to stand for election to the Federal House and were to resign their seats in the former if successful in the election to the latter.

A House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs were established for each of the Northern and Western Regions respectively while a unicameral legislature was established for the East. In the North the Executive Council was to consist of 13 ministers appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Prime Minister who must be the leader of the majority party in the House. In addition, there were to be three ex-officio members of the Council. Members of the Executive Council drawn from the house of Assembly were to be non-voting members of the House of Chiefs. The Governor was to preside over the Executive Council in each of the Eastern and

Western Region. An Executive Council made up of 9 Ministers was established. Unlike in the North, the Speaker was to preside over the House of Assembly. Both in the East and West official members were to cease their membership of the House of Assembly. This contrasted with the situation in the North. But like the North the Governors were to continue presiding over the Regional Executives. As in the North two members of the Executive Council from the House of Assembly were to be non-voting members of the Western Regional House of Chiefs.

The question of the control of police force came up for discussion since a federal system of government was now established by the new constitution. It was agreed that the control of police contingents stationed in the Regions should be vested in the Regional Police Commissioners who would be responsible only to the Governor, who in turn would be responsible only to the Governor-General. This was to prevent the police force coming under political influence.

It was agreed that the civil service be regionalized. Thus one of the strongest uniting links was cut.

There also came up for discussion at this Conference a number of issues that could not be settled immediately. These were the questions of revenue allocation, the status of Lagos, and the difficult issue of the demand for independence in 1956. As regards the first, the decision was taken to appoint a Fiscal Commission to study the problems and make recommendations. As for the issue of the status of Lagos' deadlock was reached and it was agreed by all the delegations that the Colonial Secretary should decide the issue and they all promised to abide by his decision. The Colonial Secretary decided on Lagos having an independent status as it was the political and commercial capital of Nigeria and had been developed by national funds. It was also by far the biggest port, handling a great part of the traffic with the Northern Region. Moreover, the Northern Region had some fears that its commercial interests might be jeopardized if Lagos was to remain in the Western Region. To allay these fears and to ensure national unity, Lagos was established as an independent municipality.<sup>58</sup>

On the question of independence in 1956 the Secretary of State informed the Conference that the British Government could not commit itself to a definite date for self-government for the country as a whole, particularly since the NPC delegation representing over half the country's population was opposed to it. He promised on behalf of the British Government to grant to any Regions that desired it full self-government in respect of all matters within their competence on that date with a proviso that safeguards would be inserted in the Constitution "to ensure that Regional Governments did not act as to impede or prejudice the exercise by the Federal Government of the functions assigned to it now, or act in any way which would make the continuance of the Federation impossible."<sup>59</sup>

On January 19, 1954 the Constitutional Conference re-assembled, this time in Lagos to settle issues not fully settled at the previous constitutional conference. These issues included the discussion of the report of the Fiscal Commission was accepted. The Commission had recommended the allocation of revenue on the principle of

58. Cmd 8934, Annex 5, pp. 20-21.

59. Cmd 8934, p. 11.



derivation.<sup>60</sup> On the issue of a separate regional status for the Cameroons, the decision taken was that the Northern Cameroons should continue to be associated with the Northern Region of Nigeria but the Southern Cameroons, whilst remaining a part of the Federation of Nigeria, be separated from the Eastern Region to become quasi-Federal territory.<sup>61</sup>

The question of the future of British officials serving in the public services in Nigeria was also raised since many of them were becoming anxious about their future prospects in a country moving rapidly toward independence. This anxiety was further strengthened by the policy of Nigerianization to which all Nigerian political leaders were openly dedicated. This anxiety was to some extent laid to rest by the joint statement issued by Nigerian leaders promising to safeguard the interest of expatriate officers, though still keeping to their declared policy of Nigerianization, because of their conviction that there could be no efficient administration without the help of these officials.<sup>62</sup> An arrangement was then worked out whereby all pensionable officers would have the option of retiring on accrued pension or gratuity at any time after the new constitution should have come into effect.<sup>63</sup>

The 1954 Constitution was very significant in that it provided the basis of the constitution of independent Nigeria. Its importance in this respect was highlighted by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto when he stated that of all the Conferences the 1953/54 was the most decisive; the others stemmed from it and their conclusions were logical developments, that is, there were no further structural changes.<sup>64</sup>

The decision was reached during the 1953 Constitutional Conference that the new Constitution should come up for revision within three years starting from August 31, 1953. That meant that a revision would take place by 1956. This decision could not be carried out because of the new crisis in the Eastern Region. Briefly put, the NCNC Chief Whip in the Eastern House of Assembly, E.O. Eyo, accused the Premier, Dr. Azikiwe, of corruption and gross abuse of office by injecting a sum of £2 million of public money into the African Continental Bank, in which he and his family had a substantial interest, at a time when he knew the Bank was operating at a loss and gave notice of a motion calling for an independent Commission of Inquiry on May 17, 1956. Azikiwe forestalled the motion by instituting legal proceedings against Eyo claiming damages for libel on the ground that Eyo had sent copies of his letter to the Governor, Sir Clement Pleass and to the Press. As a result Eyo's motion was ruled out of order by the Speaker on the ground that the matter was *sub-judice*. The Colonial Secretary however, decided to appoint a Commission to investigate the matter. Accordingly, a Commission, the Forster-Sutton Commission, was appointed to investigate the allegations. The Commission reported in January, 1957 and found

60. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Fiscal Commission on Financial Effects of the Proposed New Constitutional arrangements*, cmd 9026, London, 1953.

61. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report by the Resumed Conference on the Nigeria Constitution held in Lagos in January and February, 1954*; Cmd 9059, London, 1954.

62. Cmd 9059, Annex V, p. 80.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

64. Sir Ahmadu Bello, *My Life*, O.U.P. 1962, p. 161.



Azikiwe guilty of misconduct because he failed to relinquish his financial interest in the bank when the proposal to inject public money into it was being mooted. It concluded by observing that Azikiwe's conduct had "fallen short of the expectation of honest, reasonable people".<sup>65</sup>

The Report of the Commission was followed by the dissolution of the Eastern Regional House of Assembly on January 19, 1957 at the request of the Government. In the elections that followed, Zik was re-elected, the NCNC won 64 seats, AG 13 and the United National Independence Party 5 while there were two elected independent candidates who later declared for the N.C.N.C.

The crisis having been disposed of, the Secretary of State of the Colonies announced that the Conference which had been postponed could now be held. The Conference was therefore assembled on May 23, 1957. At this Conference, the Eastern and Western Region delegations requested that the promise made in 1953 by the British Government to grant regional self-government to any Regions that desired it be fulfilled. This was done and the Eastern and Western Regions became self-governing. The Governors in the two Regions ceased to preside over the Executive Councils although they were still empowered to disallow measures which violated treaty obligations or conflicted with the functions of the Federal Government. In all other matters, the Governors were to act on the advice of their Ministers. To ensure the unity of the Federation, the Governor-General was empowered to issue directions to the Region concerned to ensure that its executive authority was not employed in such a way as to impede or prejudice the performance by the Federal Government of its functions or endanger the continuance of the Federal Government in Nigeria.<sup>66</sup>

In the Northern Region, official membership of the Executive Council ceased. The officials were now to be replaced by Nigerian Ministers.<sup>67</sup> The Northern Region also declared its willingness to achieve internal self-Government by 1959 and this was readily agreed to by the British Government.

There were also now developments at the centre. A Prime Minister possessing majority support was to be appointed. The Executive Council membership would consist of 10 ministers including one from the Southern Cameroons and official membership in the Council was abrogated though the Governor would continue to preside over the Executive Council and would retain reserved powers. The existing House of Representatives was to continue until 1959, to be replaced by a new House of 320 members elected by universal adult suffrage in the East, West and Lagos and by male suffrage in the North. A Second Chamber, the Senate was also to be established. It would consist of two members from each Region and from the Southern Cameroons, four from Lagos and four others appointed by the Governor-General at his discretion to represent special interest. The Senate was empowered to delay bills other than money bills for six months.

65. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Tribunal appointed to inquire into allegation reflecting on the official conduct of the Premier of, and certain persons holding ministerial and any other Public offices in Eastern Nigeria*, Cmd 51, p. 42.

66. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report by the Nigerian Constitutional Conference held in London in May and June 1957*, Cmd 207, London, 1957, p. 8; hereafter cited as Cmd 207.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

The question of the Southern Cameroons and the police force came under discussion once more. It was agreed to grant the Southern Cameroons responsible government. An executive containing a majority of elected members and headed by a Premier was to be established and membership of the House Assembly increased to 26. A Second House, the House of Chiefs, was also set up and the Governor-General became the Commissioner for the Territory.

As regards the control of the police force, the decision was that this matter should be on the concurrent list but that after independence the ultimate responsibility for law and order should be under the full control of the Federal Government. Until then control of the police was to be vested in the Secretary of State for the Colonies. A Police Service Commission was to be set up so as to insulate the force from politics and the police force stationed in the Regions would be reorganized so as to become the nucleus of regional forces at a latter date.

As regards the unanimous demand of the Nigerian delegations that independence be granted in 1959 since the Northern Region had agreed on that date for the Territory's self-government, the Secretary of State declared that it was impossible, that he would need to watch events in Nigeria for some time before then to be able to recommend any date to the British Government. He promised however that after 1959 elections Nigerian and United Kingdom leaders could confer together to work out a process by which Nigeria could attain self-government within the Commonwealth.<sup>68</sup>

The Nigerian leaders then agreed to shift the date from 1959 to 1960 and made it clear to the Secretary of State that a resolution setting a precise date for independence would be adopted early in 1960 by the new House of Representatives and demanded a more specific guarantee from the British Government. The Secretary of State assured them that if such a resolution was received the Imperial Government would try as much as possible to meet the resolution in a reasonable and practicable manner.<sup>69</sup>

The basic reason why the British Government was unwilling to commit itself to a specific date lay in the fact by this time a new problem, the problem of the minorities, had arisen. Political conflicts which hitherto had been confined to the three major ethnic groups Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa/Fulani and which had been solved to a great extent by the establishment of a federal form of government had by then spread to the smaller groups. These various groups began to entertain fears of domination and oppression by the larger group in each Region. Consequently, they began to demand the creation of more states based on ethnic groups. Three important movements emerged to champion the interests of the minorities. These were the Calabar-Ogoja Rivers State Movement in the Eastern Region, the Benin-Delta State Movement (later changed to Mid-West) in the Western Region and the Middle-Belt Movement affecting the Northern Region. All of these movements were backed by political organizations formed for these specific purposes. By 1957 this problem had reached such dimensions that it could not be ignored by the Constitutional Conference held in that year. The Conference agreed that a Commission be appointed to ascertain the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and to propose means of allaying these fears

68. Cmd 207, p. 26.

69. Ibid.

whether well or ill-founded.<sup>70</sup> In no other solution could be found except the creation of more states, then the Commission was empowered to make detailed recommendations for the creation of not more than one new State in each Region with the proviso that the British Government before agreeing to such recommendations would have to take into account the effect of the establishment of a new State on the existing Regions in the Federation and on the Federation as a whole. Any new State to be created must also be viable both administratively and economically. This was because the British government believed that administrative and other practical reasons would inevitably limit most severely the possibility of further subdivision of Nigeria into states.<sup>71</sup>

Following this decision a Minorities Commission was appointed. It reported back on August 18, 1958. The Commission asserted that there were indeed two main genuine fears among the minorities. First, the use of physical force by political parties which was becoming a feature of Nigerian politics by this time and which the Commission described 'as a threat to democracy'. Secondly, that no Regional Government secure in its majority would pay attention to criticism or attempt to meet the wishes of the minorities.<sup>72</sup> However, the Commission claimed that the sub-division of the country into smaller units would "create more problems as great as it sought to cure". It then proceeded to make a number of recommendations which included:

- (a) The establishment of one strong police force which would not be subject to purely regional control.
- (b) The creation of special areas where special problems existed. In such areas financial and other responsibilities would be shared equally by both the Regional and the Federal Governments. Boards were also to be set up for such areas to initiate supplementary development schemes. It declared that the Niger Delta Area should be declared a special area.
- (c) It advocated the setting up of a Council in each of the Minority Areas which would be charged with the responsibility of bringing to the notice of the Regional Government matters relating to physical and cultural advancement, economic and social development and reporting any cases of discrimination. Two areas were designed Minority Areas—parts of Benin Province in the Western Region and the whole of Calabar Province in the East.
- (d) Annual Reports for both the Special and Minority Areas were to be submitted to the Federal House of Representatives and the appropriate Regional Houses.
- (e) It recommended that specific fundamental human rights be embodied in the Constitution. These included right to life and liberty, right to freedom of movement and peaceful assembly; and right to protection against retrospective legislation.
- (f) It recommended that there should be no change in the existing boundary between the Northern and Western Regions. Any change should be the result of plebiscite and this should only be held if it was agreed by all at the forthcoming Conference.

70. Cmd 207, p. 13.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

72. Great Britain Colonial Office, *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allaying them*, Cmd 505, London, 1958, p. 90.

It further recommended that 60% of the votes cast, should decide the issue of transfer of any area.

- (g) It recommended that non-Muslims in the North who were not willing to be tried under Muslim laws should have the option of being tried in a non-Muslim Court of Justice.<sup>73</sup>

After the report of Minorities Commission had been published a new Conference was summoned in 1958 to examine its recommendations and the report of the other two Commissions which had been set up in 1957. These were the Constituencies Delimitation Commission and the Fiscal Commission. The Conference met from September 29 to October 27, 1958<sup>74</sup>

The most controversial issue at this Conference, as would be expected, was the Minorities Commission Report. The AG had disagreed with the recommendations of the Commission which on the other hand had been warmly received by the NPC and the NCNC. The party wanted the problems of the minorities to be settled before the attainment of independence by putting the issue of the creation of more states in the country to test. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, however, asserted that no case had been made for the immediate creation of more states and warned that if this became an issue during the next election or at a series of plebiscites in 1958, it would delay the attainment of independence in 1960. He then proposed for insertion in the Constitution provision for the establishment of new states in the future that is, that a resolution for creating a new state would require a two-thirds majority in the Federal Legislature and that such a resolution must also be approved by a simple majority in two Regions, one of which must be the Region from which it was proposed to create the new State or alternatively by a simple majority of the Federal Legislature and a referendum to be held in the area to be transferred.<sup>74</sup> Since the Action Group believed that the question of independence was more important than the minority problems and was aware that a continued stand on the issue would delay independence and might lead to the Nigerian peoples regarding the party as unpatriotic, it agreed to the Colonial Secretary's solution. All the delegates agreed, however, that the fundamental human rights listed by the Commission be immediately incorporated into the Constitution.

In retrospect, it was unfortunate that the Minorities problem was not solved before independence. If Nigeria had been sub-divided into more states at this period, the imbalance created by the three unequal regions, the feeling of self-sufficiency felt by each Region which encouraged break-away movements within the Federation, and the cut-throat competition amongst the three major groups would have been reduced to manageable proportion and the country might not have passed through the recent painful experience of a civil war.

This did not happen and Nigeria entered upon her era of independence with a Constitution unsuitable for a country with such diverse group of peoples who had not yet attained full national unity. This fact and the weak leadership with which the

73. Cmnd 505, pp. 70-97.

74. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report by the Resumed Nigerian Constitutional Conference held in London in September and October, 1958*, Cmnd 569, London, 1958, pp. 22-34.

country was saddled coupled with selfishness and lack of high moral standard of behaviour almost destroyed a country that was ushered into independence full of hopes and showered with goodwill.



## THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA

G.O. OLUSANYA

The emergence of Nigerian nationalism pre-dated the establishment of effective British rule over the whole country now known as Nigeria. This is because the various areas which now constitute modern Nigeria were acquired at different times and certain forces and conditions favouring the emergence of the nationalist idea were already at work before 1914 when Nigeria became an administrative unit. For instance, the Sokoto jihad had led to the establishment of a caliphate made up of fifteen emirates embracing about half the present day Nigeria. By bringing together such a large area under one single political unit, the jihad paved the way for the emergence of a greater Nigeria. Moreover, Christian missionaries who had been active since the 1840s had encouraged amongst their converts the idea of the creation of a modern state which would take its rightful place in the comity of nations. Their activities which covered the whole of present day southern Nigeria helped to break down ethnic prejudices and to bring their converts in a loyalty transcending ethnic ties. The bringing together of the various groups by the British themselves within a common administrative unit fostered the spirit of oneness and a sense of unity—'the unity of common subjection'. These factors combined with the underlying unity already provided by centuries of contact (through trade, wars and cultural interaction) amongst the various Nigerian communities began to create a common consciousness as the basis of the new state.<sup>1</sup> Thus when in 1914 the British brought together the two halves of the country, they were putting the finishing touches to a process already going on even before their advent in the country.

Apart from the gradual development of common consciousness brought about by the factors outlined above, there were other factors favourable to the emergence and growth of Nigerian nationalism. There was, for instance the desire of people for self-rule, which implies freedom from foreign control. This desire was strongly expressed in the resistance of the indigenous population to British conquest and domination, a resistance which continued long after the establishment of British

1. G.O. Olusanya, "The Historical Basis for Nigerian Unity", *Journal of Business and Social Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, December, 1970.

control and which expressed itself not only in the sporadic outbreak of violence, but in a more subtle, psychological form. There was also the fact that British rule carried with it racial intolerance and discrimination, limited opportunities for Nigerians in the administrative machinery, and open economic exploitation of Nigerians by foreign enterprises with the connivance of the British colonial administration. All these factors affected all Nigerians irrespective of their ethnic origins and helped to make them see themselves not as separate ethnic entities but as a group in confrontation with another — a foreign group, the British. Thus organizations were established by Nigerians the main purpose of which was to mobilize not only a particular class or group, but the entire population of Nigeria against the oppressive British colonial rule. This generated a pan-Nigerian outlook.

As we shall see later in this chapter, Lagos, which was and remains today the capital of the country, became the main centre of national resistance to British rule. This can be explained by the fact that here was concentrated a large number of educated Nigerians who were closely in touch with the British *raj* and therefore more exposed to all the disadvantages of colonial rule. Also, in Lagos there was greater freedom allowed by the colonial administration for Nigerians to participate in organized political activities, freedom which was denied to the people in the protectorate. In addition, facilities like the press were available for use. Here too was the very centre of the colonial administration which the nationalists sought to destroy, and for this reason, it was, for tactical reasons, necessary to make Lagos a centre for nationalist protest.

Another peculiarity discernible in the nationalist movement was the predominance of southerners at the outset as leaders of the movement, a factor which sometimes tempts some scholars to question the whole basis of the nationalist movement. This predominance was due to such factors as the early opportunity for Western education vital under the new situation brought about by British rule, the greater involvement of southerners (albeit in a very subordinate role) in the administrative and commercial activities going on in the major urban centres, and the greater conflict of interest, very often at personal level between them and the British administrators and commercial interests. But it ought to be stressed that though most of these conflicts might be at the personal level, nevertheless, resentment was generally expressed at national level. This attitude was due in part to the fact that the nationalist movement had a racial undertone as a result of the racial arrogance of the British to which all Nigerians were exposed, and in part to the fact that all Nigerians had been brought together by the British as a result of which their destiny had become one and indivisible — a fact often well-advertised by one of the leading Nigerian nationalists, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, when he stated that Nigeria might have been a geographical expression but had become a historical reality. Nigerians therefore saw themselves not as disparate groups — each seeking its own selfish interest, but as a single people struggling for social justice and freedom. Thus the nationalist leaders, some of whom might not have lived outside Lagos, showed a great concern for the interest of Nigerians in every part of the country. For instance, John Payne Jackson through his newspaper *the Lagos Weekly Record* often vehemently denounced the British for waging wars against indigenous states, condemned them roundly for attacking Isekiriland in 1894 and for deposing

Nana Olomu, and protested against the British occupation of Benin in 1897.<sup>2</sup> George Alfred Williams described the bombardment of Oyo in 1895 as "a diabolical tragedy", and spoke of the British marching through the world armed to the teeth and like a roaring lion going about and seeking whom he might devour,<sup>3</sup> while James Johnson spared no pains in condemning the military expeditions which were common in the period of so-called pacification.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of its origin, it might have been clear from what we have said so far that the nationalist movement had its roots firmly in the 19th century although it was not until the 20th century that it blossomed into a full and active plant. The 19th century exponents of Nigerian nationalism were both indigenous rulers and individuals (generally referred to as traditional nationalists) who had refused to give up their territories without struggle and even when they did, rejected, as far as possible under their new status as conquered peoples, the trappings of the Western society, and those repatriates who revolted against the very Western culture that had nourished them, because they were denied a respectable place within that same culture because of their race. This made them turn hungrily towards the culture of their forebears for renewal of pride and for strength to face the new situation. These men were mainly products of the mission schools and it was by educating them and later denying them equality with the whites that the Christian missions helped to contribute their own quota to the emergence of Nigerian nationalism. This group of Nigerians was led by men such as Edward Wilmot Blyden, Bishop James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, John Payne Jackson, William Bright Davies, Tejumade Osholake Johnson, to mention only a few. They were strongly opposed to the attempts of Christian missions to denationalize Africans and were never weary of advocating a conscious rejection of those aspects of Western culture which seemed to them to be of no value to Africans and of calling on them to drink deep from the fountain of their heritage. They were also exponents and founders of the indigenous African churches which were the first concrete manifestations of cultural nationalism. Some of them demonstrated their rejection of Western culture in practical terms by dropping their English names and dresses. For example, David Vincent became Mojola Agbebi and abandoned altogether the wearing of English dress even when in Europe, Rev. S.H. Samuel became Adegboyega Edun and George William Johnson became Osholake Tejumade Johnson.

However until the 20th century there was no organized political movement to canalize the various grievances against the British colonial administration and to spearhead opposition. By the 20th century, it became obvious that opposition could only be effective if properly organized and led. To be effective the leaders of such a movement ought to be able to speak the language of the conqueror and to understand their thoughts and actions. Herein lies the importance again of the Christian missions in the growth of Nigerian nationalism. It was true that the intention of the missions was not to train people who would lead a revolt against foreign rule of which the majority of them were the great exponents, but once opportunity for education had been given, it was difficult to control the thoughts of the educated or to channel them

2. Cited in F.I.A. Omu, "Pioneer Heroes of the Nigerian Press" (unpublished) pp. 5 & 9.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

along a predetermined course. It is true that the majority of the educated Christians became deeply Westernized, but there was a small group, discussed above, that were well-educated and yet came to realize that one did not need to be denationalized to become a good Christian, and that good as Western education was in terms of science and technology, it was possible to possess these aspects and yet remain essentially African.

By the 20th century, the various countries of British West Africa were beginning to emerge as separate political entities and to attract loyalty and affection from an ever-widening public. The result was nationalism became more and more territorial. The striking difference between the 19th and 20th centuries lay in the fact that in the latter century nationalism became territorial and more organized and acquired greater following than in the former century. It was therefore able to challenge the colonial administration much more effectively. Between 1900 and 1939 the factors responsible for stimulating the growth of the nationalist movement were still basically the same as in the 19th century—problems of economic exploitation, or race relations, and of inadequate opportunities in the civil service and in the commercial houses. Two additional factors became more important during the period. These were the external factors and the almost insatiable demand of Nigerians for more education, both in quantity and quality which the colonial administration failed to meet because of the policy that each colony must live on its own, and which therefore became one of the sources of disaffection with colonial rule.

With the firm establishment of British rule the full force of colonialism began to be felt in Nigeria. For example, the imposition of capitation tax, very unpopular in Southern Nigeria because it was foreign to their tradition, was one of the obvious and unpleasant signs of the British presence in the country. There were other unpopular measures which came with the establishment of firm control. Land expropriation for government purposes, particularly in Lagos, became a source of grievance for a people passionately attached to their land and even more so when such land was used for purposes not originally stated by the administration, and when inadequate compensation was paid to their owners.<sup>5</sup> Specific measures such as the imposition of a water rate in Lagos also sparked off agitation against the colonial administration.<sup>6</sup> This was because the indigenous people did not stand to benefit much from such measures since many were not rich enough to be able to pay for the erection of water pipes in their homes. Also the harsh and arrogant way in which the colonial ruler

5. See *Lagos Weekly Record*, 15th February, 1908. The following after going to court over payment made for expropriated land received much more than what the government offered.

<i>Property Owners</i>	<i>Compensation offered</i>	<i>Court Awards</i>
King, E.H. & H.H.	£20	£200
Phillips, A.	£1: 10/-	£28: 10/-
Young, Isaac A.	£11	£184: 10/-
Solicitor Bernado	£25	£130
Gardona, Marcus	£36	£137

6. See G.O. Olusanya, "The Origins of the Lagos Town Council, *Lagos Notes and Records* II, I, June, 1968.



treated the traditional rulers as witnessed by their treatment of the Eleko in Lagos, Jaja of Opobo, and Nana of Olomu to mention a few, did not endear the administration to the people and provided them reason for opposing the British presence.

But of greater importance still were the factors already operative in the 19th century. Economic exploitation became intensified in the 20th century. African traders continued to be squeezed out so that by the later twenties Nigeria could no longer boast of large-scale business entrepreneurs. Moreover, the foreign companies which had by now formed large combines virtually controlled the economy of the country, and with the formation of UAC in 1929, the European stranglehold on Nigeria's economy could be said to be complete.<sup>7</sup> This was detrimental to the economic interests of the people. High prices were charged for imported goods and low prices paid for primary products. The British colonial administration, which should have come in as an umpire and regulated relations between African producers and consumers and the European traders, failed to do so. A free enterprise system could not operate with justice in a country where two groups at sharply different levels of development competed for trade unless it was regulated in such a way as to ensure that the underprivileged were adequately protected. This was made abundantly clear by Dr Henry Carr in his speech on the Importation of Textile (Quotas) Ordinance in the Nigerian Legislative Council. Carr complained that the purchasing power of the native producer and consumer was almost completely dissipated because of the unconscionably low prices offered for his produce prices far below the level of the cost of production, while at the same time the price of manufactured articles had not been proportionately reduced. Consequently, the African producer was, as he said, in a "parlous condition" and "cannot be saved from the disastrous effects of the opposition of competitive capitalism".<sup>8</sup>

Nigerians were also irritated by the fact that most of the profits made by the foreign companies operating in the country were taken out of the country instead of being ploughed back there. The result was that the country derived very little benefit from their activities.

Nigerians might have been able to offer some competition despite the emergence of large-scale European business enterprises if they had not been hampered by other factors. For example, they had no access to the capital market because all the banks until 1933 were foreign banks which were unwilling to give Africans credit since most could not provide the necessary security, and because of the view that Africans were on the whole dishonest. On the other hand, liberal credit was given to European, Lebanese and Syrian traders, an important factor contributing to their success in business. It was in order to fill this yawning gap that the National Bank was

7. U.A.C. was formed as a result of the amalgamation of the Niger Company and African & Eastern Trading Corporation. On the history of the U.A.C. see M. Perham (ed.), *Mining, Commerce and Banking in Nigeria*, Faber & Faber, 1948; also Burck, G. *Uniliver's Africa*; the chapter entitled "Colonial Economy" in M. Crowder, *West Africa, under Colonial Rule*, Hutchinson, 1968 particularly pp. 298-300. Other companies were John Holt, Paterson Zochonis, SCOA (Societe Commerciale del'Ouest Africain) and C.F.A.O. (Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale).

8. *Legislative Council Debates*, 12 June 1940, p. 191.



established in 1933. This bank and the African Continental Bank which came into existence much later (1948) provided generous credit for Africans. It was this that explained the close relationship between nationalists and indigenous banks.

All these grievances led to the cry of exploitation on the part of Nigerians, a cry that was given ample justification when in 1934 the Importation of Textile (Quotas) Ordinance was passed empowering the Governor to vary from time to time the duties on textile goods coming into the country. This was designed to exclude Japanese textile goods which were beginning to displace Lancashire products from the West African market because they were much cheaper. The ordinance was certainly designed to protect British commercial interests rather than Nigerian interests, for Nigerians naturally wished to be able to buy from the cheapest market possible, particularly as their purchasing power was very low owing to the poor prices paid for their primary products. This measure was opposed by all unofficial members, both Africans and Europeans. Dr C.C. Adeniyi-Jones stated: "I have no doubt that England herself realised this that in putting forward this tariff war against Japanese goods the subject races, especially those in West Africa, would be the greatest sufferers".<sup>9</sup> The appeal fell on deaf ears.

There were many other ways in which the British demonstrated their lack of interest in the economic well-being of Nigerians. For instance, the government turned a deaf ear to the pressure by the Agege Planters' Union to enact measures to ensure good quality cocoa production. It also refused to countenance Nigerian farmers' demand that they be allowed to sell their products directly to overseas buyers through the various marketing societies which were in existence rather than through the expatriate firms. Instead of granting the demand, the government insisted that their produce should be sold collectively to the expatriate firms.<sup>10</sup> But perhaps the greatest example of the efforts of the expatriate businesses supported by the British colonial administration to prevent meaningful participation by Nigerians in their economic life was provided by the hostility of the foreign banks to Tete-Ansa's attempt to lead the whole of British West Africa to economic freedom by encouraging co-operative marketing societies controlled by West Africans themselves and which would be able to deal directly with overseas buyers and thereby cut off the role of the middlemen played by the expatriate firms, and thus maximize the profit made by African producers.<sup>11</sup> To this end, he established the West African Co-operative Producer's Ltd., which was registered in Nigeria in 1928. This organization, apart from marketing West African produce, was to be responsible for importing general merchandise from abroad. A West African-American Corporation was formed and based in New York to serve as the Co-operative's sole agent in importing manufactured goods to West Africa. An

9. *Legislative Council Debates*, 12 June 1934, p. 58.

10. S.O. Adeyeye, *A History of Cooperative Movement in Nigeria*, see chapter 2 entitled "Economic basis of the Movements."

11. This section is based on A.G. Hopkins, "Economic Aspects of Political Movements in Nigeria and the Gold Coast 1918-1939", *Journal of African History*, VII, I, (1966), pp. 133-52., and on Tete-Ansa, *W. Africa at Work*, New York, 1930, p. 81.

Industrial and Commercial Bank Ltd., was formed to serve as the financing arms of the other two organizations because, as already noted, expatriate banks were not keen on giving financial assistance to African businessmen.

These efforts were not successful for various reasons. First was the fact that the bank's finances were not able to bear the burden. This was partly because it could not obtain enough subscriptions. There was also the fact that the business was not well-managed. But the greatest factor was the hostility of foreign banks to Tete-Ansa's enterprises. For example, Barclays Bank D.C.O. Ltd. and the Bank of British West Africa were intensely hostile to him and advertised in West Africa and in Europe and the U.S.A. that Tete-Ansa was a crook out for 'blood money'. Although he sued the banks in New York and won the case,<sup>12</sup> nevertheless the damage had been done and public confidence in the enterprises was destroyed. Out of bitterness and frustration Tete-Ansa turned his attention to politics.

Another important source of grievance was the deterioration in race relations which accompanied effective British presence in Nigeria. Although race relations were already bad in the 19th century, by the 20th century they were worse. The first half of that century witnessed an increase in the physical separation of the two races. Separate residential areas were established for Europeans not only in Lagos but throughout the country. The European reservations were generously provided with amenities—good roads, good water-supply, electricity and other comforts of life, while the African sections were generally left in squalor. What was yet more irritating was that the money spent on providing comfort for the whites was the taxpayers' while the taxpayers themselves derived little benefit. Also the doors of opportunities for Africans both in the administration and in the commercial houses were not only locked but barred. Africans were no longer to be appointed to responsible posts in the administration. The highest position which most of them could now hold was that of Chief Clerk.

Furthermore, Africans were irritated by the fact that the colonial administration was unwilling to provide adequate educational facilities. Until the post-Second World War period education was left mainly in the hands of the Christian missionaries who, despite their efforts, did not achieve much because of inadequate finance and the basic reason underlying their educational programme. Their educational activities were not geared to produce high-level manpower but were directed to provide their converts with basic education so that they would be able to read and write and understand the basic Christian teaching. Nigerians were very aware of the importance of Western education in the new situation brought about by colonial rule and were determined to seize every opportunity offered for achieving this. This notwithstanding, the administration showed little interest in this area. There were very few secondary schools and these were not free, which meant in effect that secondary education was limited to those very few whose parents could afford it or to those whose parents were prepared to make heavy personal sacrifice. There was no post-secondary institution in the country until 1948, and university education abroad was confined to an insignificant number. When at last government decided to establish the Yaba Higher

12. Lagos Daily News, 23 October 1931.

College in 1934, it was not given university status. It was to offer diplomas, not degrees, and its graduates were to be employed in subordinate positions to those with university degrees. Moreover, the number of students admitted each year was conditioned by the number of vacancies envisaged in the government departments. In the first year only 18 students were admitted and the highest number of students ever admitted at any one time throughout its existence was 36. In addition, subjects such as economics which would have qualified Nigerians for posts in the administration were deliberately excluded. Nigerians therefore did not see in the establishment of the college a fulfilment of their hopes. Indeed, it was in order to organize opposition against the college that the Lagos Youth Movement, later to become the Nigerian Youth Movement, was formed.

The situation in the North was worse. The Northern administration remained unconcerned about the Northerners' demand for education. This apathy on the part of the administration in the provision of education was bitterly resented by northerners. For example, the Jos Tribal League in a memorandum submitted jointly with the Jos Branch of the NYM to Sir Arthur Richards in 1943 when he visited the area deplored the educational system which according to them "has not made it possible to produce even one single northerner who can enjoy what is now known in the Nigerian Civil Service as the Higher or European appointment" and condemned the unwillingness of the colonial administration to establish a secondary school in Jos despite a primary school population of 2,000.<sup>13</sup>

The failure of the British colonial administration to provide education was accurately reflected in the 1938 Report of the Board of Education for the Southern Provinces of Nigeria: "This country is in an invidious position of providing fewer opportunities in regard to education than any other British possessions in Africa. And yet the youths of the country are not lacking in educable capacity".<sup>14</sup> The inadequacy of the administration in providing education for Nigerians was one of the important factors making for the growth of the nationalist movement in the country.

★ Added to these internal factors were the impact of the First World War, the Garveyite and Pan-African Movements, the Indian struggle for Independence and the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. The First World War had considerable impact on the development of political consciousness and consequently on the nationalist movement. First, it helped to shake the foundation of the colonial empires. Secondly, the Allied propaganda which stressed the principle of self-determination and which in turn provided the basis for the peace settlement found a warm response in the hearts of the subject peoples. The impact of the war and the increasing political consciousness in Nigeria were well described by the *Nigerian Pioneer*. It stated that never in the history of the country had Nigerians been placed in so intimate a contact with other parts of the world as they were then, that everyday news was brought of what was happening in India, Australia, America, Canada and Europe. It went on to talk about the rumblings in other parts of the world and to say that Nigeria was not unaffected by

13. See Joint Memorandum submitted by Jos Tribal League and Jos Branch of the N.Y.M. to Sir Arthur Richards, Governor of Nigeria, on his visit to Jos in Solanke Collection.

14. Department of Education, *Annual Report*, 1938, p. 8.

these. It concluded: "Similar events are produced by similar causes. In Nigeria, partly out of the effect of the Great War there is a noticeable difference in the actions of men".<sup>15</sup> There was certainly a noticeable difference in the actions of Western educated Nigerians because they became very critical of British policy and actions.

Also partly as a result of the ferment created by the war, there came into existence political organizations which were to constitute the instruments for the effective waging of verbal warfare against the colonial administration in the inter-war years. The two most important were the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP).

### The Emergence of Political Organizations

As has been observed above, the 19th century did not witness the emergence of any political organization which could serve as a vehicle for airing grievances and expressing the aspirations of Nigerian continuously. By the early 20th century the fact of the British presence had been brought home so forcibly to the people by the various military expeditions sent out to conquer groups resisting the imposition of British rule and by the introduction of a number of measures—water rate, land expropriation and capitation tax, to mention a few—that it was felt that the old political methods practised in Lagos of public meetings and sending petitions to governors and the Colonial Office were no longer adequate to meet the new situation. As a result, political organizations began to make their appearance. The first of such organizations was the People's Union formed by Drs Obasa and Randle specifically to agitate against the water rate but generally to champion the interests of the people of Lagos. This body became popular almost immediately and attracted members from all sections of the community—educated Africans, chiefs, and Muslim leaders. Its failure, however, to prevent the imposition of the water rate in 1916 considerably reduced its popularity. The organization was also handicapped by the constant disagreement and bickerings among its leaders. With the emergence of the NCBWA in 1920 and the NNDP in 1923, the organization lost the majority of its supporters; and by 1926 it had completely ceased to exist.

Two years after the formation of the People's Union another organization—the Lagos Ancillary of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (LAARPS) made its appearance. Though this was a humanitarian body, it is nevertheless relevant to our discussion because in a colony it is difficult to draw a clear line between political issues and humanitarian questions, and it will be seen that the major issue to which the body devoted its attention was only indirectly humanitarian. The organization ostensibly came into existence to champion the interest of Nigerians generally but its attention was taken up by the agitation over the land question. In 1912 fear was greatly entertained that the land system in Northern Nigeria, whereby all the land was taken over by the administration and held in trust for the people, would be introduced into the South. Educated Africans were convinced that this would be the first step towards depriving Nigerians of their land. They believed that if they succeeded in preventing the system being extended to the South, the battle for its destruction in the North

15. *Nigerian Pioneer*, 15 October 1920.



could then be successfully waged. This movement, like the People's Union, attracted important personalities in Lagos. Amongst its members were Bishop James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, C.A. Sapara-Williams, J. Da-Rocha, Cardoso, A. Alakija and J.P. Jackson, the editor of the *Lagos Weekly Record*. It organized a deputation to London to present its view on the land question to the British government. The delegation was discredited by the quarrels which broke out among its members over the delegation fund. There were accusations of embezzlement against some of the members of the delegation. The organization did not survive for long. As usual, disagreement and quarrels among its members paralysed it, and the death of some of its leading members before 1920 sounded its death knell.

It can be seen that the two organizations established before 1914 were not very effective. Moreover, they came into existence to champion specific causes. They did not possess effective organization or an ideology. They therefore depended for their existence not on programmes but on personalities. This, in fact, was the major reason for their ineffectiveness. However, with the outbreak of war and the political awareness generated by it, a number of organizations which were more dynamic came into existence. Three of these particularly deserve our attention. They were the Lagos branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the NCBWA, and the NNDP.<sup>16</sup>

#### Universal Negro Improvement Association

In 1920 a branch of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association was formed in Lagos as a result of the initiative of Rev. W.B. Euba and Rev. S.M. Abiodun.<sup>17</sup> The news of its formation was received with anxiety by the Colonial Office because of the belief that Garvey's movement was a subversive one. Garvey had attracted the attention of the British government when during the World Negro Convention in New York in 1920 he sent a message of support to the Irish leader, de Valera. Moreover, his journal, the *Negro World*, was considered so subversive that it was banned not only in Nigeria but throughout West Africa, both by the British and the French governments. The Lagos branch did not survive long owing to the hostility of fellow Nigerians, members of the NCBWA and the colonial administration. But during its short span of life it served as an inspiration to men like Ernest Sessi Ikoli, its first Secretary, and Azikiwe, who were to play leading roles in the nationalist movement from the thirties. Azikiwe, writing about the influence of the *Negro World* on him, stated that the motto of Garveyism: "One God, One Aim, One Destiny" appealed to him and he therefore resolved to formulate his philosophy of life, as far as practicable, towards the evangelization of "the Universal Fatherhood, Universal Brotherhood and Universal Happiness". On another occasion Zik confessed that "Marcus Garvey's epigram [*sic*] made me ambitious for Africa".<sup>18</sup>

16. The others are The Peoples Union of the Lagos Ancillary of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society and the Reform Club.

17. G.O. Olusanya, "Notes on the Lagos Branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association", *Journal of Business & Social Studies*, 1, 2, 1969, p. 135.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 141.



Nigeria's debt to Garvey and his movement was aptly expressed by the *West African Pilot* when it stated:

Garvey has lived and died leaving an indelible impression of his feet on the sands of time which neither the forces of space nor those of time can obliterate for ever . . . He revolted against the idea that the African was destined to take the back seat forever. He refused to admit the alleged inferiority of the African. He pooh-poohed all ideas which identified black people as inferior beings. And throughout his short life (he died at the age of fifty) he inspired Africans to regard their black complexions with pride and to develop race-consciousness so as to look forward to a place under the sun. Marcus Garvey was the fountain from which spring other more scientific, constructive and effective ideas of Pan-Africanism [sic]. His memory should be revered by all those who believe in the future of Africa.<sup>19</sup>

### The NCBWA

Although there had been attempts at forming a regional political body such as the NCBWA before the war, the attempts failed to get off the ground for a number of reasons. There were those who believed that such a body embracing the whole of British West Africa would be impossible to organize because of the practical problems posed by poor communication facilities, the different levels of development of the four territories, and the fact that there was no tradition of close co-operation in the political field among the four territories.<sup>20</sup> The initiators of the idea—Joseph Casely Hayford and Dr Akinwande Savage—had to do a great deal of spadework to ensure that their idea was translated into practice. Wide publicity was given to the idea through *The Gold Coast Nation* a newspaper belonging to Hayford and edited by Akinwande Savage, and letters were written by the two men to important men in Lagos, Freetown and Bathurst soliciting their support for the new movement.<sup>21</sup> With the outbreak of the First World War and developments in other parts of the world, it was felt that delay was no longer in the interest of West Africans. As a result, a conference was summoned at Accra in 1920. It was at this conference that the NCBWA was formed. The conference then decided to send a delegation to the Colonial Office to put across more effectively the views of educated Africans and a memorandum was prepared making *inter-alia* the following demands:

1. The establishment of a Legislative Council for each of the four West African territories—one half to be elected and the other half nominated.
2. That appointment and deposition of chiefs be left in the hands of the people.
3. The separation of the Executive from the Judiciary.
4. The abolition of racial discrimination in the Civil Service and in social life.
5. The establishment of an appeal court for British West Africa.
6. The establishment of a University for West Africa.

19. *West African Pilot*, 23, May 1940 cited in Olusanya, op. cit., p. 142.

20. G.O. Olusanya, "The Lagos Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. IV, 2, June, 1968.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

The delegation did not succeed in its mission, partly because of the opposition of the four West African Governors and partly because the Colonial Office itself was not convinced that the territories were ripe for the demands.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Colonial Secretary did not consider them representative of the teeming millions in West Africa.<sup>23</sup> He therefore turned down their demands. Interestingly enough, Sir Hugh Clifford, who had led the opposition to the demand of the West African nationalist leaders, requested that the elective principle be embodied in the new constitution he worked out for Nigeria in 1922. His demand constituted a dilemma to the Colonial Office, which had only two years before turned down the request of the NCBWA. However, owing to Sir Hugh's influence in the Colonial Office, the demand was conceded and Nigeria thereby led them in the achievement of effective representation in the whole of British Tropical Africa.<sup>24</sup>

The grant of the elective principle led to an important development in Nigeria, that is, to the emergence of more effective political organizations. With their emergence a more effective means was provided for Nigerians to air their grievances and express their aspirations. The most important of the new organizations was the NNNDP and the NYM. Most of the others<sup>25</sup> were too weak both in organization and leadership, too conservative in their approach and attitude to warrant our attention here.

#### 1.1e NNNDP and NYM

The NNNDP owed its existence to Herbert Macaulay,<sup>26</sup> one of the greatest of Nigeria's nationalist leaders. It was formed specifically to contest the 1923 elections and from that time until 1934 it dominated Lagos politics. It could be argued without exaggeration that the political history of Lagos in the twenties and thirties was essentially the history of Herbert Macaulay's political activities. The reasons behind Macaulay's dominance of Lagos politics were many and varied. First was the fact that he possessed the necessary background and education for a successful political career. He was the son of T.B. Macaulay, the founder of the CMS Grammar School, Lagos. His mother was the daughter of the saintly Bishop Ajayi Crowther. Thus he belonged to the upper segment of the society of that period. Interestingly enough, he was born the same year that his maternal grandfather, Ajayi Crowther, was appointed missionary Bishop of the Niger Diocese, and was old enough to resent the humiliation suffered by the latter and his forced resignation in 1890 from the post of Bishop. This means that he grew up at a time when race-relations were beginning to deteriorate. This must have helped to sharpen his sense of grievance against the British colonial administration. He himself was subjected to racial discrimination while in the Civil

22. CO 554/46/53561m 16th November, 1920.

23. *Ibid.*

24. See chapter on the Constitutional Developments.

25. The others were the Reform Club, Union of Young Nigeria, and the People's Union.

26. Herbert Macaulay, C.E., F.R.G.S., 1864-1946. Education: St. Paul's Breadfruit, Lagos, C.M.S. Faji Day School, Lagos, 1870-76; CMS Grammar School, Lagos 1877-80, Articled to G.O. Bellany, Borough Surveyor and Water Engineer of Plymouth 1890-3 and obtained Associate Membership of the Institute of Civil Engineers, Surveyor of Crown Lands for the Colony of Lagos 1893-95. Later established as a private Surveyor, Founder of the NNNDP.

Service. He was paid a salary far below what a European foreman in the same department was earning, even though he was a fully qualified civil engineer.<sup>27</sup> This must have quickened his desire to leave the Civil Service. Thus Macaulay had enough reasons to wish to be hostile to the colonial administration.

Unlike some of his contemporaries and opponents such as Sir Ekitoyi Ajasa (who was trained in Britain from his youth), Macaulay received his primary and secondary education at home in Nigeria—St. Paul's Breadfruit, CMS Day School, Faji and the CMS Grammar School, Lagos, founded by his father. This gave him an opportunity of mixing with children from all sections of the community and gave him a command of the Yoruba language which he used to great advantage in his political career. Macaulay also possessed an extensive knowledge of local history and a working knowledge of European history, which proved very useful to him in the various tracts he wrote. Moreover, he made sure that he built up an image for himself. He was always dressed in immaculate white jacket a big black bow-tie and wore a square cut moustache. He was a great entertainer, humorous in conversation and a good violinist and entertained members of the Lagos community in his house, 'Kirsten Hall'. Macaulay was also an eloquent speaker and understood crowd psychology well. He played on the emotions of his audience with skill and artistry. He was fond of using those high-sounding words and phrases which until now delight Lagos audiences. He was also a great publicist of himself and his activities and he fully utilized his paper, the *Daily News*, to project his image and his activities.

Macaulay was indeed a great tactician in politics. This proved of tremendous value in his political career. He was always in support of popular issues and in this way he fully identified himself with the aspirations of the people. He was a good organizer and ruled his party with an iron hand. It was this that ensured its long existence for, as we have already seen, earlier political associations generally broke up because of rivalry and bickering among their leaders. Macaulay allowed no rival.

But it would be wrong to see Macaulay only as a local patriot. Though his activities might be essentially centred in Lagos because of the British policy of the period which forbade political activities outside Lagos,<sup>28</sup> nevertheless his thoughts, his vision, his political action and his journalistic activities encompassed the whole of Nigeria. Indeed Macaulay stood for the interests of all Nigerians. Individuals and groups came to him from all parts of the country to request his aid in redressing grievances, in righting wrongs done to them by the British administration and in articulating their hopes and aspirations. It is on record that he never turned down any of such requests or showed undue favour to any particular group. His private papers speak volumes on this. Indeed no other Nigerian leader had attained his stature in the Nigerian society. People came on pilgrimage to his home from all parts of the country. His national stature was well attested to by Nigerians from the various ethnic groups. For instance, the Royal House of Buguma in their letter to him addressed him as "the Moses of our age,"<sup>29</sup> while Prince Adenuga, the Osemawe Elect of Ondo declared:

27. E.A. Ayandele; 'An Assessment of James Johnson . . . Part II, 1990-1917, op. cit., p. 84.

28. See Awolowo, O., *AWO: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, Cambridge, 1960, p. 116.

29. See Letter from the Royal House of Buguma, New Calabar, to Herbert Macaulay. 25/10/1932, Macaulay, papers University of Ibadan Library.

"Your interest in the whole of Nigeria irrespective of dialect—and your ability to express the views of the natives to the government at all times are well-known to all Nigerians".<sup>30</sup> Thus, Macaulay was a truly nationalist figure committed to the whole of Nigeria.

However, like most first generation West African nationalists, Macaulay was essentially conservative in his approach. He did not at any time quarrel with the goal of British policy in Nigeria, but only with specific policies and actions of the colonial administration. One of the aims of his party was to maintain an attitude of 'unswerving loyalty to His Majesty the King Emperor'. He was very proud to be a British subject and his political goal was a self-governing Nigeria within the British Commonwealth.

This notwithstanding, it cannot be gainsaid that Macaulay was a nationalist leader of great stature. He towered head and shoulders above his rivals. He understood perfectly well the value of a well-organized and disciplined political organization and publicity. He laid the foundation for a mass protests movement which was to become more intensified in the future. His passionate attachment to British rule was essentially a limitation which all members of his generation possessed. His failure was therefore the failure of his time.

By the mid-thirties his organization was beginning gradually to lose its popularity. Macaulay himself was ageing and was losing touch with the Lagos crowd. He did not seem to react adequately to the new and pressing questions of the period, the problem posed by the economic depression of the thirties, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, and the Indian struggle for independence which caught the imagination of many Nigerian youths.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, there was coming into existence a new breed of men more radical than Macaulay and less likely to submit to the autocratic control which he exercised over his party. These men, many of whom had been trained in England and the USA and had therefore been exposed to all forms of racial discrimination, came back to their country to right what they regarded as historic wrongs. These young men therefore felt the need for an organization which would be nation-wide and which would wage a more incessant warfare against the colonial administration. Consequently, the Lagos Youth Movement, which had been formed in 1934 to organize opposition against the Yaba High College,<sup>32</sup> was turned into a national organization and renamed the Nigerian Youth Movement.

This new body which embraced almost all the young intellectuals of the period—H.O. Davies, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr Vaughan, Dr Kofo Abayomi, Obafemi Awolowo to mention a few—started with great promise which was not destined to be fulfilled. Its ambitious charter defined its aim as that of developing a united nation out of the diverse elements to be found in Nigeria. It set forth as its goal the achievement of autonomy within the British Empire. It advocated mass compulsory and free education, the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, universal adult suffrage, protection of Nigerians against unequal economic competition, better

30. See Letter from Prince Adenuga, Osemawe Elect to Herbert Macaulay, 15 June 1975. Ibid.

31. On the unwillingness to allow political activities in Lagos, See O. Awolowo, *AWO: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, Cambridge, 1960, p. 116.

32. See page 552.



conditions of service and more higher executive appointments for Africans in the administrative branch of the Civil Service, and it was opposed to discriminatory emoluments between Africans and Europeans in the service.

The movement became very popular and branches were organized throughout the country. The party's popularity was put to test in the elections of 1938 and it emerged strengthened and still more popular, having defeated the NNDP and won the three seats in Lagos.

There has always been a tendency to regard the NYM as a purely southern party. This is because the majority of its members were southerners. But this was due to the hostility of the British administration and of the emirs acting under the influence of that administration. This hostility notwithstanding, there was a vigorous branch of the party in Jos made up of both northerners and southerners,<sup>33</sup> and individual northerners in other parts of the North such as Mallam Jumare became members. Many more might have joined but for the attitude and the authoritarian régime of the emirs and their British overlords. What happened to Mallam Jumare provided a lesson for others. He was dismissed from his post as a teacher for his membership of the NYM, and had to be given a job at the party's secretariat in Lagos.<sup>34</sup> Thus the hostility of the northern administration to participation of northerners in politics made the NYM, though national in outlook and in organization, essentially a southern party. However, its national outlook was demonstrated by the joint memorandum presented by its Jos Branch and the Jos Tribal League to Governor Richards in 1943. The memorandum deplored the policy of administering Northern Nigeria as a distinct administrative unit, the non-representation of northern Nigerians in the Legislative Council, and the educational system which made it impossible to produce highly qualified northerners. It advocated special consideration for northerners in the award of scholarships. It condemned the northern official view which laid great emphasis on the difference between the North and the South. Finally, it condemned racial discrimination in the province and the unwillingness of the colonial administration to establish a secondary school in Jos despite a primary school population of 2,000.<sup>35</sup>

By 1941 the party was paralysed by an internal crisis. In 1941 Dr (later Sir) Kofo Abayomi, a member of the organization and one of its representatives in the Legislative Council, resigned his seat to proceed to the United Kingdom for further studies. It therefore became necessary to nominate another party member to contest the vacant seat. Two members finally emerged for nomination—Ernest Sessi Ikoli and Samuel Akinsanya (now Oba Samuel Akinsanya). Azikiwe supported Akinsanya (Yoruba-Ijebu) while Awolowo supported Ernest Ikoli (Ijo). It would appear that the rank and file favoured Akinsanya's candidature while the leaders believed that Ikoli as the President should be given an opportunity. The final decision according to the rule of the organization rested with the Executive which decided in favour of Ikoli. Azikiwe

33. See Address jointly presented by the Jos Branch of the NYM and Jos Tribal League to Sir Arthur Richards, Governor of Nigeria on his visit to Jos in Solanke Collections, Ghandi Library, University of Lagos.

34. Awolowo, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

35. See the Address jointly presented by the Jos Branch of the NYM and Jos Tribal League to Governor Richards, *op. cit.*



resigned in annoyance and all the Igbo members of the organization resigned with him. This was a cause for suspicion to the non-Igbo members, who believed that though Azikiwe had supported a Yoruba, his support was not based on conviction but was dictated by the desire to split the organization in which he found his ambition somewhat thwarted. The fact that all the Igbo members resigned with him gave the other members food for thought. They reasoned that if the Igbo continued the policy of closing ranks on issues while the others remained divided on grounds whether of principle or personality, it was only a question of time before the Igbo dominated all the rest. Herein lay one of the factors that led to the formation of the Action Group (AG) in 1950.

The resignation of the Igbo members, the desertion of the organization by some of its able leaders such as H.O. Davies who took up a Civil Service appointment in 1941, and the unyielding attitude of colonial autocracy which had a demoralizing effect on the rank and file finally destroyed the organization. As a result of the above factors the NYM was divided and disorganized. It was not able to lead on the movement for national independence which gathered momentum during the Second World War.

#### **The Situation in Northern Nigeria**

It would be wrong to believe that because of the absence of organized political associations along Western lines in Northern Nigeria, that area was untouched by the ferment of nationalist ideas. Resistance to colonial rule did not manifest itself to any extent in political agitation by political parties or by the sending of petitions to Governors and the Colonial Office, but in very many other ways, such as 'sporadic' outbreaks of violence against arbitrary acts of the administration as against policies detrimental to the interests of the subject peoples, and passive resistance to orders from the administration. Resistance to colonial rule took this latter form in the Northern Region, and it can be claimed without fear of contradiction that the whole of Northern was not 'pacified' even until the outbreak of the Second World War. That war and the great ferment of ideas that accompanied it, and the expansion of Western education in that territory led to the emergence of organized political association and parties and increasing demand for participation in government and administration with a view to eventual attainment of independence.

#### **The Impact of the Second World War**

The Second World War had a great impact on the development of political consciousness and therefore on the nationalist movement in Nigeria. In the first place the war itself was, according to Allied propaganda, waged to preserve democracy, which could not exist in a colonial situation. Secondly, the war greatly undermined the foundation of colonial empires. It also weakened colonial powers economically and thereby militarily and therefore undermined the strongest weapon for the maintenance of colonial territories. Indeed the colonial powers had to depend on their subject peoples for their survival. If the colonial powers were incapable of protecting themselves, the argument that they provided protection for their colonies could no longer be valid. In addition, the brutality which accompanied the war undermined the faith of many of the imperial powers in their 'sacred mission'. How could such actions be reconciled with the claims that they were civilized nations shouldering the

burden of the subject peoples? Furthermore, the war broke down to a considerable extent the formality which had hitherto characterized the relations between Africans and Europeans. A large number of Nigerians were recruited into the army where they lived and fought side by side with white soldiers and came to realize more than ever before that, skin pigmentation apart, all human beings are basically the same, subject to same fears and hopes.<sup>36</sup> This helped to destroy the aura which had hitherto surrounded the whites and which had helped to bolster the 'whiteman's superiority'. The treatment meted out to Nigerian soldiers during the war—discrimination in rates of pay and in treatment between them and Indian and white soldiers did not endear them to colonial rule. Moreover, they travelled far and wide and thereby broadened their horizon. They realized the technological, social and economic gap in the development between their country and other parts of the world and they were determined to bring about a change in the land of their birth. They came home as new men with new skills, new hopes and new aspirations. Their hopes and enthusiasm might have been channelled to enable them to contribute in a positive way to the development of their countries if the colonial administration had been fully prepared to resettle and re-absorb them into the society. Unfortunately, the administration was ill-prepared and showed little or no imagination in tackling the problems of the demobilized soldiers. To make matters worse, while thousands of the demobilized ex-servicemen were still without jobs, European ex-soldiers were being brought into the country and provided with jobs.<sup>37</sup> This was a cause for resentment. Furthermore, some of the specific grievances, such as the lack of opportunity in the Civil Service for Africans, racial discrimination, and economic exploitation were still as prevalent as they were before the war.<sup>38</sup> All these sharpened the sense of grievance of Nigerians.

By 1945 the full economic impact of the war was beginning to be acutely felt. Prices were rising abnormally without any corresponding increases in wages. The result was that a large number of people were subjected to unbearable economic hardship. It was this economic strain and the existence of a radical trade union movement which accompanied Imoudu's ascendancy to power in that moment that led to the famous strike of 1945 which almost paralysed the economic life of the nation. The existence of such unions as the Railway Workers' Union led by Michael Imoudu, a believer in positive action, provided the nationalist movement with moral, financial and physical support. The workers constituted the bulk of the literate population and it was through them that ideas about freedom penetrated to the illiterate masses. Hence the alliance between the politicians and the trade union movement was very significant for the nationalist movement. Another factor that helped to increase the sense of grievance was that the 1922 constitution had remained unchanged except for the appointment of two non-officials into the Executive Council in 1942.

The newspapers, particularly the *West African Pilot*, played a significant role during this period in whipping up political consciousness. They carried out a sustained

36. G.O. Olusanya, 'The Role of Ex-servicemen on Nigerian Politics', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, VI, 2 August 1968.

37. G.O. Olusanya, op. cit., p. 227.

38. See my book entitled '*The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria*', chapter 3 (Evans, University of Lagos), 1973.

campaign against the very moral basis of the colonial administration in virulent language. They focused attention on the various ills attendant upon a colonial situation, highlighted news of racial discrimination in the U.S., Britain, and in South Africa, and were thus able to build up an image of an oppressive, heartless and uncaring administration and of the arrogant race-conscious whiteman. In contrast, they painted a rosy picture of freedom. The hostility of the newspapers to the colonial administration was so noticeable that an English journalist after a visit to Nigeria in 1945 wrote of "a revolutionary native press which quite seriously threatens the stability of this part of the Empire".<sup>39</sup> The local administration itself was much concerned about the hostility of the press. This was revealed in a speech by the Governor in the Legislative Council:

Our Press is free—free to abuse, to sabotage effect, to kill enthusiasm to impute bad motives and dishonesty to poison the springs of goodwill and foul the well of trust to impregnate the body politic with envy hatred and malice—in short, free to do the Devil's work".<sup>40</sup>

Unfortunately, there was no effective political organization to canalize the various grievances and to champion the cause of the people. The NYM, as we pointed out, was already paralysed by dissension. The absence of an effective organization in the country greatly disturbed some young Nigerians who had become acutely politically conscious. To fill the void, the Nigerian Union of Students organized a rally at Ojokoro in 1943 to which all the political leaders were invited and it called upon the NYM to offer leadership for the national cause. But as the organization was already suffering from a paralysis of will owing to internal dissension, it could not respond to the offer. However, the youth refused to be discouraged. They organized a series of meetings to which various organizations were invited. It was this series of meetings that led eventually to the formation of the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC, later changed to the National Council for Nigerian Citizens when the Southern Cameroons was detached from Nigeria) in August 1944 with Herbert Macaulay as president and Azikiwe as secretary. It was this organization that provided the leadership for the national cause until 1951 when two new parties—the AG and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) were formed. One of the issues to which the new organization devoted itself was that of the constitutional proposals published in December 1944 by the new Governor, Sir Arthur Richards.

These proposals,<sup>41</sup> which according to the administration were designed "to keep one step before public opinion", were received with hostility by the NCNC<sup>42</sup> for many reasons. These were the non-consultation of Nigerian public opinion before devising

39. C. Winchester, Report to Lord Kemsley on the British West African Press (typescript, 1945). Cited in J.D. Chick "The Nigerian Press and National Integration", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, K, 2, July 1971, p. 14.

40. *Legislative Council Debates*, 18th March, 1946, p. .... Also cited in the above work.

41. See chapter on Constitutional Developments in Nigeria.

42. See Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Proposals for the Revision of the Constitution of Nigeria*, Cmd. 6599, London, HMSO, 1945.

the new constitution, the retention of the principle of nomination, the non-extension of the principle of election, the failure of the constitution to accord Nigerians greater participation in the whole process of government and administration, and the accusation (difficult to substantiate) that the constitution was designed to foster the policy of *divide et impera*.

The NCNC spearheaded the opposition against the new constitution. It used the time lag between its publication and the date fixed for its coming into operation to send a delegation to the United Kingdom to demand that the new constitution be revised to meet its demands.<sup>43</sup> The delegation did not achieve its objective and, what is more, discredited itself by the quarrels among its members over the delegation funds and the accusation of embezzlement made against some of its members. With the return of the delegation to the country, the NCNC seemed to have lost the will to exist and entered into a dormant phase. The failure of the organization to achieve the revision of the Richards Constitution before it came into operation was perhaps due to the fact that the NCNC was too constitutional in its approach. It was still wedded to the old idea of sending delegations to the Colonial Office—an attitude of mind typical of the nationalists of the inter-war years. This is not surprising, however, considering the fact that its president until 1946 when he died was Herbert Macaulay, who was a true representative of the politicians of the inter-war years in this respect. If the NCNC had been able to organize and exploit for political ends the various bodies such as the trade unions, the Zikist Movement and the ex-servicemen, that had arisen after the Second World War as a result of disenchantment with the colonial administration, as Nkrumah and the United Gold Coast Convention did on the Gold Coast with ex-soldiers, the Colonial Office might have been willing to accede to greater change. It was the exploitation of the grievances of the ex-soldiers and the economic situation of the period by the United Gold Coast Convention which ensured that the new constitution granted to the Gold Coast immediately after the war was still-born.<sup>44</sup> Instead the NCNC leaders, not keen on following the path of revolution, were easily defeated and almost gave up the struggle. It was as a result of the inactivity of the NCNC after 1947 that the most radical organization in the history of Nigeria made its appearance and impact on the political scene. This was the Zikist Movement.<sup>45</sup>

This organization came into existence in 1945 during the assassination story episode with the avowed object of protecting Azikiwe from his enemies. Until 1947 it was merely a junior branch of the NCNC and spent its time celebrating Zik's birthday and the like. But with the inactivity of the NCNC and the stirring developments on the Gold Coast, it emerged on the political stage to fill a void. The movement sought to undermine and destroy the colonial administration by organizing strikes and boycotts and sometimes by sheer violence. It advocated non-payment of taxes, the boycott of Empire Day celebrations, a day on which it believed that the slavery of the colonial subjects was commemorated. It also advocated the military training of youths. It

43. For a full History of the delegation, See Onyido, *The NCNC Delegation to London in 1947*, Aba, 1950.

44. See Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946-1960*, London, 1964, chapter 2.

45. G.O. Olusanya, "The Zikist Movement—A Study in Political Radicalism", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, IV, 3, November, 1966.



published pamphlets of a seditious nature which were secretly circulated only among its members. To their detriment, its members were so anxious to offer themselves as martyrs for the nationalist cause that they did not organize properly before going into battle with the colonial administration. Moreover, the isolated cases of violence traced to its members did not do the organization credit. Furthermore, most of the older politicians, particularly Azikiwe who had inspired the formation of the movement, not only failed to give it support but turned round and condemned its members as hot-headed and irresponsible youths.<sup>46</sup> Following the Enugu shooting incident,<sup>47</sup> during which period the movement organized demonstrations and protests which invariably led to rioting, and the evidence of a government security officer that the members of the organization were bringing explosives into the country, and following the attempt of one of its supposed members to assassinate the Chief Secretary, Sir Hugh Foot, the movement was declared illegal in April 1950<sup>48</sup> and its officers sent to prison. With its demise and with the entering of the country into a period of prosperity which came about as a result of the Korean war resulting in a great demand for Nigeria's primary products and the policy of concession<sup>49</sup> and conciliation being pursued by the administration, political radicalism ceased to exist in the country.

We have already noted that the NCNC delegation which went to Britain to protest against the new constitution came back without any practical achievement. This did not mean however that it did not have any impact on the British public and government. For example, the *Economist*, writing about the delegation, asked: "But could not more be done in associating the colonial peoples with the responsibilities of government . . . If intelligent Africans could be given more responsibility than they are at present, some counterweight to Zikism might be provided . . . Could not there be less of the outward symbols of the British raj that irritate the sensitive, educated African as much as they impress the illiterate".<sup>50</sup> Moreover, there was at the Colonial Office a man who was very sympathetic towards the aspirations of dependent peoples. This was Arthur Creech Jones. Furthermore, Sir Arthur Richards left Nigeria in 1948. As long as he remained in Nigeria it was difficult to give concessions to the nationalists without their interpreting it as a sign of weakness or capitulation to agitation—a belief that might further increase the tempo of agitation. It might also inflate unduly the ego of the nationalist leaders and would be a slap in the face of the governor. This was because relationship between the nationalist leaders and the governor had reached its nadir. In addition, the local administration in Nigeria was somewhat scared by the situation on the Gold Coast where rioting which claimed lives had taken place in 1948.

46. *Ibid.*

47. This was the shooting down by police of peaceful, unarmed miners who were on strike. During the period the Zikist Movement were responsible for stirring up riots in different parts of the country and a state of emergency had to be declared.

48. *The Times*, 14, April 1950.

49. For example, nationalist demands in the field of education were being met by the establishment of the University College, Ibadan in 1948. Also Nigerianization of the Civil Service was beginning to be actively pursued, local government reform was being carried out. All these helped to stem the tide of political radicalism.

50. *Economist*, 26 July 1947, p. 141.



They therefore decided to anticipate such an occurrence in Nigeria. As a result, they impressed on the Colonial Office that a revision of the constitution was desirable,<sup>51</sup> even though the new constitution had only lasted three years, whereas it was envisaged to last for nine years. As a result of these factors, the new Governor, Sir John Macpherson, announced in the Legislative Council in 1949 that the constitution would be revised and that in revising it the errors of the past would be avoided and public opinion would be fully consulted. His promise was faithfully carried out and the result was the 1951 constitution, otherwise known as the Macpherson Constitution.

The new constitution attempted a compromise between the apparently irreconcilable views of the northerners and the southerners. Because of the gap in the level of development between the North and the South, partly as a result of the late contact of the North with Western influence and the British policy of Indirect Rule under which the North was 'overprotected' from external influences, the North had lagged behind both politically and socially and was therefore more disposed towards a gradual evolution of the country towards self-government. Moreover, because of the fear that they (northerners) might be dominated by the southerners because of the latter's earlier advantage of Western education vital under the new dispensation created by the British presence, they (the northerners) insisted on using their preponderance in numbers to achieve power. The South felt that it was being dragged backwards by the North. These conflicting views had to be harmonized if the country was to achieve independence as a single unit. This was what the 1951 constitution attempted to do, but like many compromises it was hardly satisfying. Both Azikiwe and Awolowo strongly criticized it. Awolowo described it as "a wretched compromise between federalism and unitarianism".<sup>52</sup>

The constitution was too tightly-knit for a country with diverse groups of people who had not yet developed a sense of unity. Moreover, it retained the three unequal regions, with one of them, the Northern Region, so big as to dominate the other two. Despite this, the constitution might have worked if those called on to operate it had done so in good faith. But this was absent. The result was that the constitution did not survive long. Barely three years after its birth it had ceased to exist.

✱ Its weaknesses notwithstanding, the Macpherson Constitution was a landmark in the history of the country. It was the first time Nigerians had been called upon to help in working out a constitution for themselves. Thus the constitution provided Nigerians practical training in the art of constitution making. Of more importance, perhaps, was the fact that it generated the formation of political parties by granting Nigeria semi-responsible government, and thus began an era of party organization in Nigeria. Unhappily, the two new parties that emerged, the AG and the NPC, were regional not national parties, and thus the new constitution with its emphasis on regionalism brought into active play the forces of ethnic nationalism and regional division in Nigerian politics. ✱

51. Sir Hugh Foot. *A Start in Freedom*, London, 1964. Sir Hugh Foot was the Chief Secretary to the Nigerian Government at this period.

52. Obafemi Awolowo, *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, O.U.P., 1960, p. 179.

### The Emergence of Political Parties: Action Group

The AG's entry onto the political scene was very dramatic. Although it had been in existence since 1950 none, except its founders, were aware of it until it was publicly launched at Owo in April 1951. It was openly declared a regional party. One of its aims was to bring and organize within its fold all nationalists in the Western Region, so that they might work together as a united group, and submit themselves to party loyalty and discipline.<sup>53</sup> The new party was an efficiently organized political machine with well-defined aims and an inspiring programme of action. Its appearance on the political scene marked the beginning of active party organization in Nigeria. The NCNC, which had existed before it, was not, in the strict sense of the word, a political party. It was but a conglomeration of various bodies whose general aim was "to provide a medium of expression in order to secure political freedom".<sup>54</sup> There was no individual but only group membership. Thus the NCNC was essentially a national front, a factor that explained its weakness, its lack of discipline and its inability to exploit successfully the grievances of the various sections of the Nigerian population to political advantage. It was after the formation of the AG that the NCNC was converted into a party with individual membership and a clearly defined programme of action.

Indeed one of the factors which led to the formation of the AG was the weakness and inactivity of the NCNC since 1947, for the AG was formed to meet the need for a political organization in the West first and for the whole country later.<sup>55</sup> During the working out of the new constitution in 1950/51, the NCNC had become so dormant<sup>56</sup> that its influence was not felt at all. Azikiwe, the leader of the party, was in fact out of the country. It had been realized at the 1950 conference by the Westerners that while the Easterners were well-organized and northerners loyalty accepted the leadership of Balewa, the westerners were disorganized and lacking in leadership. The AG was formed to fill this void and to provide the necessary leadership and organization for the peoples of the West. Between 1944 and 1951 Azikiwe and the NCNC dominated the political scene and the NCNC membership cut across the various groups in the South. The party could lay claim to strong support from a large articulate section of the Yoruba population. The NYM was already dead. But Azikiwe and the other NCNC leaders failed to utilize this position of advantage to build up the NCNC into a really strong party and thereby nip in the bud any attempt to create another party, at least in the South.

The point has already been made that the AG made no secret of the fact that it was a regional party. This fact, the secrecy surrounding its formation, its connection with the Egbe Omo Oduduwa<sup>57</sup> (Society for the Descendants of Oduduwa), and its unrelenting advocacy of a federal form of government for the country helped to label it as a Yoruba party and it has often been accused of ushering into Nigerian politics an

53. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

54. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *The Development of Political Parties in Nigeria*, p. 10.

55. Awolowo, *op. cit.*

56. G. O. Olusanya, "The Impact of the Second World War on Nigeria's Political Evolution". University of Toronto Ph.D. Thesis, March 1964, p. 281.

57. Awolowo, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

era of ethnic nationalism. This argument cannot be fully substantiated. There was no doubt that Chief Awolowo utilized the Egbe, but this was for tactical reasons. It was natural that he should utilize an existing organization which he had himself founded to gather support for the new one. This was sound, practical sense. But the two organizations were kept separate and disagreement broke out between them when it was suggested by some members of the Egbe that the Egbe should be involved in politics.<sup>58</sup> Awolowo preferred that it should be kept as a cultural organization only.<sup>59</sup> The AG's advocacy of a federal form of government cannot also be equated with ethnic nationalism. In fact, it should be seen as a suggestion based on sound practical commonsense. For a country as large as Nigeria, with such diverse groups of peoples at various stages of development, a unitary government was not likely to be successful, unless imposed by force. Indeed, Azikiwe and the NCNC on occasion also advocated a federal form of government on an ethnic or linguistic basis.<sup>60</sup> The only difference was that they were not consistent about it. It is also difficult to agree that the AG exhibited ethnic chauvinism by starting out as a regional party. In the first place the Western Region in which it had its base did not comprise a Yoruba population alone, but also contained Edo, Igbo, Ijo, Itsekiri, Urhobo, and Isoko and Ishan people etc., although the Yoruba were in the majority. The very fact that its membership embraced these other groups shows that it was not conceived purely as a Yoruba party.<sup>61</sup>

#### The Northern Peoples' Congress

A year after the AG was formed another regional party, the NPC, made its appearance. This was purely a northern party and it made sure that this fact was well advertised. Membership of the organization was limited to northerners and the motto of the party was "One North, One People, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe".<sup>62</sup> One of its declared objectives was regional autonomy within Nigeria.<sup>63</sup> The party came into existence as a result of the 1951 constitution which began the process of devolving powers to Nigeria. Before then the only political organization in the North, apart from the various youth movements, was the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU).<sup>64</sup> This had been founded by Raji Abdallah in 1947. Its existence was short-lived because of the hostility not only of the British administration but of the conservative emirs of the North.<sup>65</sup> Despite the absence of any effective political organization, the northerners, except for a negligible minority, kept away from parties

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. See for example, NCNC, *Memorandum on the New Constitution of Nigeria*, op. cit.

61. K.W.J. Post, *The Nigerian Federal Elections in 1959*, O.U.P., 1963, p. 34. Post showed that of the 60 original members 21 were from the minority groups—7 Itsekiris, 6 Binis; 4 Urhobos; 2 Ishans; 1 Kukuruku, and one Ijaw. Three of the four Vice-Presidents were non-Yoruba.

62. The best account of the formation of parties in Northern Nigeria is to be found in B.J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, Frank Cass, 1968.

63. See the G.O. Olusanya, op. cit., p. 302.

64. G.O. Olusanya, 'Political Awakening in the North: A Re-interpretation, JHSN, IV, 1, December 1967.

65. Ibid., p. 131.

organized by southerners. This was partly due to the ignorance of each other arising from the policy of 'divide and rule' practised by some northern officials. This policy encouraged isolationism in the region. This isolationism, coupled with the fear of domination entertained by northerners because of the relatively slow development of the region in the field of Western education necessary for effective operation of the Western imposed system of government, was responsible for the northerners' indifference to political overtures from the South.

With the 1951 constitution which signalled the effective beginning of the withdrawal of the British from Nigeria, the formation of a political party in the North could no longer be delayed, if the northerners were not to be dominated by southerners. Influenced by some British officials to ensure that an organization that would emerge would be conservative,<sup>66</sup> a cultural organization the *Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa* formed by Dr R.A.B. Dikko, the first northern doctor, was turned into a political party—the NPC. The more radical northerners had earlier left the *Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa* because of the hesitancy of the majority of its members to turn it into a political organization. This group led by Mallam Aminu Kano organized a party of their own—the Northern Elements Progressive Union.

With the formation of the AG and the NPC, ethnic nationalism and regional divisions triumphed over the forces of unity in Nigerian politics. From 1951 onwards the history of the nationalist movement was not a particularly edifying one. The political leaders concentrated not only on fighting the British administration which was, in any case, ready to go at the right time, but dissipated their energies on 'a war of succession'.<sup>67</sup> As J.D. Chick puts it: "Once it became clear that the principle of political independence would be conceded, attacks upon the colonial authorities were overshadowed by a struggle for succession in which politicians and newspapermen alike were deeply involved. The cohesion of the nationalist front was gradually undermined as Igbo and Yoruba leaders manoeuvred for dominant positions within the organization . . . Eventually rivalry between ethnic blocs in the south was partially submerged by the more profound clash of Southern interest with those of the emergent North".<sup>68</sup>

Following the Kano disturbances engendered by the AG leader's tour of the North to "educate the Northern peoples about the crisis in the House of Representatives over the self-government motion",<sup>69</sup> the British Government came to the conclusion that a constitution like that of 1951 could not work in a country whose population was as diverse as in Nigeria.

66. Dudley, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

68. J.D. Chick, "The Nigerian Press and National Integration", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, IX, 2 July 1971, p. 116.

69. Anthony Enahoro, an AG member, moved a motion in the House of Representatives in 1953 that the House accepts as an objective the achievement of independence in 1956. The northerners who felt that achievement of political independence by 1956 would lead to their political enslavement opposed the motion. This led to a walk-out by the AG and NCNC members and to the resignation of the AG members of the Cabinet. It was this crisis that the AG wanted to explain by organizing the tour.



A new constitutional conference was held and this led to the working out of the 1954 constitution. The new constitution established a federal structure of government for the whole country and gave each of the three main groups—Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa/Fulani—dominance in their own regions. This, however, did not solve the problem of disunity in the country. Indeed, federalism entrenched further regional isolationism, particularly since each region was large enough to stand on its own. Moreover, rivalry amongst the regions and groups to dominate the political scene further strengthened the forces of disunity. Furthermore, each region contained substantial minorities who wanted the creation of more states on an ethnic basis because of fears of oppression and domination—fears which were found to be deep-seated by the Minorities Commission appointed in 1957. This, however, could not be solved unless independence was delayed and, in any case, there were so many minorities that the British government feared that there would be no end to the creation of states. Moreover, many of the new states that were envisaged would not be viable either economically or administratively. The problem was therefore half unsolved.

### The March Towards Independence

From 1951 onwards it would appear that the British were ready to leave the country. Once the process of handing over power to the colonial subjects had begun, there could be no going back except the unusual happened. There was therefore not much to struggle for. The only thing that was in dispute was when precisely independence was to be achieved. This was because the British had already accepted as inevitable the achievement of independence by their colonies owing to the new climate of opinion and forces let loose by the war.<sup>70</sup> The only areas where difficulties existed were the multi-racial territories such as Kenya and Rhodesia. Nigeria and the other West African territories were not in this peculiar position. However, the British did not want to leave behind anywhere, if possible, a country that would fall apart after their departure. They therefore sought to bring about a compromise between the conflicting views of the North and the South as to the desirable date for the achievement of independence. If Nigerian leaders themselves had been united, it was probable that they might have been granted their desire before 1960. Nigeria therefore did not have to exert any great pressure on a colonial government that was willing to make concessions and to withdraw. There is therefore a great deal of truth in Azikiwe's statement that Nigeria had been offered independence "on a platter of gold". It is perhaps the relatively easy way in which Nigeria achieved her independence that made it difficult for her people to develop any strong sense of unity and national purpose. There were no great crises to forge a sense of unity among the people. The road they travelled to their destiny was broad and well-paved, thanks mainly to the changing circumstances brought about by the Second World War.

Thus although Nigeria achieved independence with the semblance of unity, there were deep fissures within the structure. It was the widening of these fissures with the march of time and the absence of a strong leadership that plunged the country into the recent crisis which almost destroyed the body-politic.

70. M. Perham, "The British in Africa", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. XIX, July, 1957, p. 647.



## EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

S. O. OSOBA and A. FAJANA

One of the major aspects of the changing relationships between England and the Nigerian people during the 19th century was the introduction and development of Western-type literary education. This foreign variety of education has co-existed ever since with different forms of indigenous education, but has progressively gained in importance during the 20th century when the three major British interests—Christian missions, commerce and formal colonization—became firmly entrenched. The fortunes and significance of Western-type education were affected by a welter of objective social, cultural, economic and political factors operating in the various Nigerian societies, just as the entire Nigerian society was itself significantly influenced and altered by the impact of this imported brand of education.

While it may not be possible to give equal weight to all the many changes resulting from the enforced confrontation and interaction between the two sets of cultural influences—the foreign and indigenous—competing for the minds of Nigerians during our period, we do intend to outline the main patterns of change and focus attention on the character of the emergent Nigerian society produced by this change.

### Beginnings of West Literary Education and Its Raison d'Etre

The introduction of Western education in Nigeria could be dated to the 1840s, when European Christian missions made their first successful and enduring incursions into the territories bordering the Atlantic Ocean in the south. Different studies have adequately demonstrated that in establishing themselves on the Atlantic Coast of Yorubaland and the Niger Delta, and in penetrating the hinterland, the Christian missions relied on, among other methods, the attractions of Western education. Thus conceiving education as a major means of proselytization, the missions had a very narrow view of education for Nigeria. It was therefore a familiar strategy that when a mission established a new post anywhere in this area, one of the first facilities it endeavoured to provide was a school. The missionaries, recognizing that the task of converting the 'unyielding' adult 'pagans' to Christianity would be a herculean one, tended to turn their attention to the children whom they hoped to 'catch' through the school. Given this basic strategy, the curriculum was heavily weighted on the three Rs—reading, writing, and arithmetic—sufficient to enable the children to operate under the missionary banner.

The missionary programme of educating the 'natives' was consequently restricted initially to the limited objective of producing marginally literate Nigerians, preferably

literate only in their own mother tongues. It was envisaged that the products of this education would operate in their familiar social milieu and would, therefore, be able to transmit the new message of salvation to their own peoples. There was no question, for most of the 19th century, of really introducing the 'benighted savages' to the mysteries of the whiteman's scientific and literary knowledge, or of establishing educational institutions geared to meeting the social and material needs of Nigerians. The main, if not exclusive, concern of mission schools was to produce "school masters who were to graduate to catechists, deacons and then priests, while girls' schools were established mainly for the wives and fiancées of their male workers".<sup>1</sup> There was, therefore, a basic anti-intellectualism built into the missionary educational system. This was betrayed in the almost universal reluctance of the foreign missions to encourage education beyond the primary school level among their converts, except probably in Yorubaland. From the 1890s the needs of the newly established colonial administration and the importunate demands of ambitious Nigerians gradually began to compel both the missions and the colonial government to change somewhat the emphasis in the education of the 'natives'.

In the event missionary achievement in the 19th century in the area of formal education was very modest indeed. For one thing, the missions were not really interested in the promotion of secondary education, which from their evangelical viewpoint was superfluous and was likely to make the 'natives' materialistic and intellectually arrogant. The inevitable consequence of this was that the few secondary schools, like the CMS Grammar School Lagos (1859), the Roman Catholic Teachers' College (later St. Gregory's College, Lagos and Methodist Boys High School, Lagos (1878) which were established under the nominal auspices of the various missions, enjoyed virtually no financial support from the parent missions. These schools, operating on the limited funds subscribed by the local congregations and the few relatively wealthy local philanthropists, were understandably of poor, at best indifferent quality, during their formative years. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Lagos Governor, MacCallum, discussed in 1898 most of the clerks supplied by those secondary schools as "illiterate and ignorant".<sup>2</sup> The neglect by the missions of secondary and teacher training education during this period also meant that even the primary schools lacked qualified and competent staff. In spite of the attempts to recruit teachers from the West Indies and the older British settlements of West Africa, the staffing situation was still so bad in 1901 as to draw an adverse comment from the Inspector of Schools who wrote:

Very few of the teachers in the schools in the Protectorate hold any certificate or have received any training as teachers. They are for the most part mission agents of whose duties teaching in the Mission schools forms only a part and no educational qualifications or attainment are required for them.<sup>3</sup>

1. E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, (London, Longmans Green and Co., 1966), p. 286.

2. Cited by E.A. Ayandele, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

3. Cited by E.A. Afigbo, "The Background to the Southern Nigerian Education Code of 1903", *J.H.S.N.*, Vol. V, No. 2, (June 1968) p. 207.

In fairness, however, to the missionary pioneers of Western education in Southern Nigeria, certain objective constraints on their initiative have to be recognized. Even though the missions could be seen as the harbingers of British colonial rule in Nigeria, their own operations in many parts of Southern Nigeria actually preceded the establishment of formal British occupation by between thirty and fifty years. In a situation like this, it is understandable that the educational enterprise of the missions was inspired more by the spiritual and and sectarian concerns of the churches they represented than by the secular needs of a colonial policy which was being hammered out only gradually and in a haphazard manner. This was because they were guided almost exclusively by their own conservative instincts, and it was not until the closing years of the 19th century that they began to feel the influence of some effective secular authority on their activity in the field of education.

Even this influence from the colonial administration was initially manifested more in hortatory declarations and symbolic gestures than in any far-reaching policy measures. The primary consideration of the British administrations set up in the Niger Delta and Yorubaland between 1885 and 1900 and which, along with the Lagos Colony, were crystallized into the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906, was to establish an effective British presence in these areas at minimum cost to the British taxpayer. This meant in effect that initially and for long the colonial administration placed the emphasis on military and diplomatic campaigns among the people, while giving the advancement of education a low priority and perfunctory attention. It is in this light that one should see the 1882 Education Ordinance Code of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate. Even though both measures raised hopes of improving educational standards through ensuring effective supervision, enforcing higher criteria of efficiency, increasing educational opportunities by establishing government schools (the 1903 Code even envisaged a three-tier educational system under which high or secondary education—the top tier—would receive a new fillip) and providing some financial support to missionary educational effort these remained little more than pious hopes until the post-World War II years.

It might be argued, as an extenuating circumstance, that the colonial administration in the South of the country could not achieve as much improvement of the educational system as the 1882 Ordinance and the 1903 Code envisaged because of difficulties put in its way by the missionary bodies which had monopolized education from the beginning and were suspicious of the secularization which government intervention might bring. Nevertheless, the performance of the colonial authorities in the Hausa-Fulani North from 1900, where they had practically no Christian missionaries to deal with was equally, if not more, disappointing.<sup>4</sup> There are several reasons for the failure of the foreign Christian missions to make a significant educational impact on the Muslim emirates of the North, but these have been copiously discussed elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> The important issue, however, is that Lugard and his successors,

4. By the time of Lugard's departure from Nigeria in 1918 there was a total of 15 primary and industrial schools in the North, in addition to a few mission schools operating mainly in the non-Muslim areas, and all with a total enrolment of between 700 and 800 pupils from among a population estimated at 9 million. [See S.S. Waniko, "Lugard's Educational Policy in Nigeria, 1900-1906 and 1912-1918" (Typewritten script, National Archives, Kaduna, June 1961) pp. 3-4]
5. See (i) A. Fajana, "The Evolution of Educational Policy in Nigeria, 1842-1939". (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1969) Chap. 5; (ii) E.A. Ayandele, *op. cit.*, chap. 4; (iii) S.S. Waniko, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-14 and (iv) Walter S. Stewart, "Indirect Rule and the Political System in Northern Nigeria", *Geneve-Afrique*, Vol. IX, No. 2. (1970) pp. 55-57.

guided by considerations of effective colonial administration and by the example of Southern Nigeria, where the products of missionary schools, invoking egalitarian Christian concepts, were already becoming a thorn in the flesh of both the colonial authorities and the traditional rulers, decided on an essentially government-sponsored secular education for the Muslim emirates. However, in spite of the secular character of the Lugardian educational system in the North, it had severely limited objectives, and betrayed the traditional colonial government stinginess in financing the education of subject peoples.

In the first place, Lugard revealed, as early as November 1901, that the main concerns of his educational programme were to buttress the Islamic basis of the traditional emirate authorities, which he considered vital to his administrative strategy of ruling the territory through the agency of the emirate institutions, and to insulate the North from the supposed corrupting influence of the Western-educated 'natives' of the Lagos Colony and Southern Nigeria. Lugard's stated intention about encouraging the Muslim emirates to develop their pre-existing educational system along secular lines was, however, never translated into action. On the contrary, Lugard and his successors starved the Koranic schools of funds with the result that gradually, especially with the growing competition from Western-type schools, they declined not only in numbers but also in quality. In this way, under colonial rule, the Koranic schools lost their centrality in the whole exercise of Islamic acculturation and the training of valuable manpower for the bureaucracies of the emirate communities.<sup>6</sup>

The Lugardian policy for education in Northern Nigeria helped in fixing the segregation of the Muslim emirates from their non-Muslim relations to the South. Even within the administrative territory, known as the Northern Nigerian Protectorate, Lugard, armed with his segregationist and parochial ideology advocated (and tried to provide) separate education for the Muslim and so-called 'pagan' sectors of the population. In a special memorandum written in 1913, he had indicated his intention to build a Central Pagan School in the North, "but the idea was soon abandoned in favour of the more parochial system of separate schools at Dekina, Ankpa or Kabba Province, and at Kombe [or more correctly perhaps, Gombe?—ed.]"<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, learning from what they obviously regarded as the tragic mistakes made by the missionaries in the South, Lugard and his successors decide to control scrupulously the rate and direction of the dissemination of Western education in the Muslim emirates. The Lugardian educational programme for the North, apart from its emphasis on isolating the Muslim North from the 'pagan' South, was based on four types of socially segregated schools to ensure that people from the various social classes learnt from the very early stages of going to school to know their places in society and

6. See Haroun al-Rashid Adamu, *The North and Nigerian Unity: Some Reflections on the Political, Social and Educational Problems of Northern Nigeria*, (Zaria, 1973) for a discussion of the way in which the colonial Government's parsimony from the Lugardian era and half-hearted decision-making by the Northern Nigerian government even after 1964, created a situation whereby the Koranic schools "in their structure and curriculum of studies reflect the medieval concept of Koranic education long discarded by all progressive Islamic Societies", pp. 56-57.

7. Ibid.



to eschew what was denounced as the reckless ambition for advancement and equality being shown by the mission-educated Southerners.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the limited objectives of the pioneers of Western education in Nigeria, the missionaries in the South being interested in education as an instrument of evangelization, and the colonial administration being interested in schools as factories for producing various categories of minor functionaries (like clerks, junior technicians in public works, sanitary inspectors, etc.), educational development for most of the colonial period was hopelessly inadequate for meeting the needs of a modern state. While it is true that between 1882 and 1929, various measures including the Lagos Education Ordinance of 1882, the Southern Nigeria Education Code of 1903, the 1916 and 1926 Education Ordinances attempted to establish some kind of administrative machinery for the supervision and control of education and as well provided increased government financial support for the schools—all of which resulted in some statistical growth in educational facilities—it is equally true that, compared with the needs of the country, government initiative in promoting education was grossly inadequate. One result of this feeble patronage of education by government was that in the South where prolonged contact with the whiteman had generated the belief that Western literary education was the 'open sesame' to the mysterious world of the whiteman, there sprang up many private mushroom schools of poor or indifferent quality. Not even the Lugardian policy of awarding government grants to schools on the basis of efficiency and performance could stop this trend towards the mushrooming of what came to be disparagingly described by a later colonial official as "hedge schools".<sup>9</sup> As early as 1915, there was already an overwhelming preponderance of unassisted schools, which numbered 587 compared with 53 government-owned and 82 government-assisted schools in Southern Nigeria.<sup>10</sup> That the situation, whereby most

8. Lugard's dislike for the products of missionary education in the South came out quite clearly in his 1914 Memorandum on Education in the Cameroons and Southern Provinces, in which he levelled two principal charges of failure against the system, viz:

- (a) "that the youngmen are unreliable, and lack integrity, self-control and discipline, and show no respect for authority, and that a large proportion are ill-educated;
- (b) that the output is insufficient so that Nigeria has not only to draw on neighbouring West African Colonies (90% of the Native Clerical Staff of the Northern Provinces are non-natives of Nigeria) but also from the West Indies etc." [Cited by S.S. Waniko, op. cit., p. 28].

See also J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley, University of Calif. Press, 1963), p. 137 and S.S. Waniko, op. cit., pp. 22, for details of the different categories of schools in the Lugardian system.

9. The term 'hedge schools' was first used by Governor Clifford, Lugard's successor, as an appellation for the many ramshackle schools in Southern Nigeria.

10. S.S. Waniko, op. cit., p. 25.



children going to school in Southern Nigeria were consigned to these low-grade unassisted schools, had not changed noticeably by 1947 in spite of the platitudinous pronouncements of successive colonial administrators, is revealed by the following figures. In 1947, throughout Lagos Colony and the Southern Provinces there were 183 Government and N.A. primary schools attended by 26,040 pupils, 473 government-aided non-grant-aided voluntary agency schools attended by 358,592 children (more than two-thirds of school-going children).<sup>11</sup>

Government, however, did make some half-hearted attempts at controlling these 'hedge schools', some of this attempt taking the form of enquiries into Southern Nigerian schools in 1925 (the reports of which showed that many schools were deficient in many respects).<sup>12</sup> The solution proposed, in a Government Bill tabled in the Legislative Council, was to give government the power to close down bad and inadequate schools, and to determine and insist on the adoption of curricula which would be beneficial to the people. Among the measures envisaged by government for implementing this hard-line policy were the establishment of a Board of Education, the registration of teachers and the introduction of supervisors who were to keep in close touch with the schools in their charge so that they might raise the standard of education being given.<sup>13</sup> Understandably, African opinion, both within the Legislative Council<sup>14</sup> and without,<sup>15</sup> was almost unanimously opposed to the bill, which was seen as an attempt by government to victimize private schools that were trying, in difficult conditions, to provide a facility which government should, but would not, provide. Articulate Nigerians also saw the bill as a deliberate government device to lower educational standards in Nigeria by frustrating the efforts of these private schools to reduce mass illiteracy. From the viewpoint of these Nigerian 'nationalists' of the 1920s "any education was better than no education".

Partly because of the stiff opposition of articulate Nigerians to this negative policy of closing down the so-called hedge schools, but mainly because government was not prepared to bear the financial and organizational responsibility necessary for radically improving these schools or providing better alternatives in the event of their closure, the policy hardly went beyond the issuing of empty threats and admonitions by government. The statistical data cited above on the preponderance of non-grant-aided schools in 1947 clearly reveal that government did not attempt to execute vigorously its policy on 'hedge schools'. In any case the colonial government right up to the early 1950s had no answer to popular demands for mass education. The report of a

11. Figures called from Otoni Nduka, *Western Education and the Nigerian Cultural Background* (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 73, Table II.

12. See reports by Messrs Falk, Ashby, Ingles, Butler etc., NNA CSO 26 03527 Vol. II, which revealed among other things that attendance was poor and irregular, schools were ill-equipped, the tone was low, content of the curriculum was doubtful and teachers were untrained.

13. NNA NL/F2 Leg. co. Debates. 16 February 1926, p. 62.

14. NNA NL/F2 Leg. Co. Debates, 5 May 1926, p. 46.

15. See for example (i) *The Lagos Weekly Record* 13 February 1926, (ii) *The Nigerian Advocate* 17 February 1926; and (iii) *The Nigerian Spectator* 30 July 1927.

meeting of the Nigerian Board of Education held in 1929 clearly betrays government's unwillingness to embark on a programme of educating the masses. And because it repeats the various spurious excuses usually invoked in official circles to cover up this unwillingness, it deserves to be quoted at length:

'What steps does Government propose to take to provide education for the mass of children unable to obtain schooling?' Here is our old friend again. The answer is that Government is quite alive to the problem, but it is useless to open schools until they can be sufficiently staffed, especially when the Code is framed to obtain the closure of those which are inefficient and not in the interests of the children. Immediate solution would entail importation of teachers and the provision of a large sum of money. Now financial difficulties cannot be overcome immediately. Government gives large grants to assist schools for salaries and buildings when their own schools sadly need rebuilding. When I am asked what is Government doing for education I quote Education Estimates, which show the approximate totals of grants paid to be as follows: 1926 £53,000, 1927 £71,000, 1928 £88,000 and for 1929 I estimate £110,000 at least will be required. Education can only have its share of Government Revenue, and it is getting that. I do not believe that 'any education is better than none'. In Nigeria, under present circumstances, it is a lie if it includes schools of the inefficient type'.<sup>16</sup>

The report ends with a plea from the Board of Education which, in Nigeria's circumstances of the time in question, amounted to giving the people stones when they asked for bread, and this mainly because bread cost some money when stones did not:

On the other hand, there is an enormous field for community service of every description, which properly and wisely applied, will confer more lasting benefits than inefficient schooling. Also it has the merit of requiring neither certificated teachers nor expensive buildings. Such service is educational equally with schooling and it affects lives of the people even [if] it does not satisfy those who speak of their needs.<sup>17</sup>

The educational scene in Nigeria was characterized until 1951/52, when the first majority African governments came to power in the regions and in Lagos, by a policy which was long on words and short on action. Even though this Board of Education, as the report of its 1929 meeting quoted above reveals, boasted that education was "getting" its share of Government Revenue, the facts as reflected in the following table indicate that this share was for a long time a miserly one.

16. *A Bulletin of Educational Matters* (published by the Education Department Nigeria, Lagos) Vol. 3, No. 2 (April, 1929), p. (iii).

17. *Ibid.*

Table 1: Colonial Government Expenditure on Education in Nigeria, 1914-52

Year	Expenditure on Education	% of total revenue	% of total expenditure
1914	£ 47,900	1.3	
1919	£ 49,216	1.1	
1925-5	£ 116,301	1.7	1.8
1929-30	£ 263,456	4.2	4.3
1934-35	£ 225,038	4.5	4.7
1939-40	£ 264,461	4.3	4.0
1944-45	£ 485,113	4.5	4.8
1949-50	£2,308,530		8.1
1951-52	£8,324,000		16.9

Sources: Otonti Nduka, op. cit., pp. 38, 47 and 77 and J.S. Coleman, op. cit., p. 126, Table 13.

These figures are an eloquent testimony to the government's lack of concern for rapid and adequate development of education in Nigeria even if one is generous enough to make allowance for the inevitable financial retrenchment of the decade of Depression (1929-39). Significantly, in 1934-35, two years after the establishment of the much criticized Yaba Higher College, government expenditure on education actually fell below what it was five years earlier. And what looks like a remarkable increase in 1949-50 could be accounted for primarily by the heavy initial capital expenditure on the new University College, Ibadan, founded in 1948. The apparently phenomenal rise in expenditure in 1951/52 was not accidental, this being the first year of the implementation of the Macpherson Constitution under which the majority African governments which came to power in the regions and Lagos laid a new emphasis on the expansion of education. For instance, the Action Group government in Western Nigeria had to amend drastically in 1952 the first budget which it inherited from the colonial officials to provide £80,000 for 200 post-secondary scholarships tenable in British and American universities and at University College, Ibadan whereas the original colonial budget did not provide for even one scholarship.<sup>18</sup> This was the pattern adopted by all the other governments in the country, with the overall interest and investment in education increasing so rapidly that by 1958 infinitely more had been achieved in educational development than in the preceding ninety years of missionary and colonial government's sponsorship of education. For instance, whereas in 1947 the total attendance at primary schools all over Nigeria was 609,353 by 1958 it had risen to 2,545,336 (an increase of over 400 per cent and even the relatively less developed Northern Region registered an increase of over 300 per cent). Overall

18. Obafemi Awolowo, *AWO: An Autobiography*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 49.

attendance at secondary schools rose from 9,908 in 1947 to 84,998 in 1958 (about 85 per cent) with the North registering an increase of 1,600 per cent. Similar phenomenal increase took place in the growth of teacher-training facilities and technical and vocational schools.<sup>19</sup>

### The Accelerated Pace of Educational Development in the Period of Decolonization and After

In spite of the limited objectives of the pioneers of Western education in Nigeria and their reluctance to embark on a programme of mass education, colonial rule itself and the accompanying colonial economy were already bringing about certain fundamental changes in the Nigerian society—changes which in turn created a growing, almost unquenchable thirst for Western literary education among many sections of the Nigerian population. For one thing, as British rule in Nigeria became more effectively established in the opening decades of the twentieth century, the most lucrative areas of the Nigerian economy—the export trade in cash crops, the import trade in manufactured goods and mining—came under the growing monopolistic control of alien commercial concerns operating in Nigeria under the protective umbrella of the British colonial government. Moreover, the banking institutions which financed these economic activities and became substantially enriched by them were British. Apart from subsistence farming, fishing, hunting and crafts in which a substantial section of the population was engaged, the only other economic activities open to Nigerians, unequipped with some measure of Western literary education, were the cultivation of cash crops like cocoa, groundnuts, oil palm, cotton and rubber, usually on a small scale and by the back-breaking, low-yielding traditional methods; petty trading in farm crops or imported manufactured articles, which on the whole guaranteed little more than mere subsistence income; and wage employment as unskilled labour on the larger cash-crop farms, at the docks, mines, in civil construction and on the railways—an engagement which, by common account, has always been poorly remunerated. Perhaps, the only significant exceptions to this pattern of foreign monopoly of the big plums of Nigerian commerce are the major commercial transactions in the export of kola nuts from the forest regions of Western Nigeria to the northern emirates and the reciprocal export trade in cattle, sheep and goats from the North to all parts of Southern Nigeria. Both commercial enterprises have always been dominated by rich Hausa-Fulani magnates with a large number of lesser folk from both regions of the country serving as agents and intermediaries.<sup>20</sup>

The only other career opportunities in the colonial economic system which were relatively better remunerated and provided some opportunity, albeit limited, for social and economic advancement were virtually closed to those Nigerians who had not acquired a measure of Western education. These included careers as minor and inter-

19. Figures computed from Otonti Nduka, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-75 and 127.

20. The significance of the cattle and kola trades and of the rich, largely non-Westernised emirate magnates dominating it even within the colonial economy, originally escaped our attention, but was pointed out to us by Professor Abdullahi Smith of the Ahmadu Bello University.

mediate functionaries in the colonial bureaucracy and the foreign commercial firms as clerks, technicians and artisans, and in the schools and missions as teachers, catechists and priests. Some indigenous businessmen emerged as moderately substantial proteges to the foreign firms (in the capacity of produce buyers, factors and agents for distributing manufactured goods on wholesale and retail basis), but even among such people survival and growth were more assured for those who had acquired literacy or had reliable literate subordinates.

Consequently, the growing realization among the vast majority of conscious Nigerians that, in the virtually closed colonial economy, the only significant opening to self-improvement socially and economically lay in Western education, would account for the persistent demands from the 1920s not only for mass education, but also for quality higher education, both of which the colonial authorities saw as potentially subversive of their own political and economic hold on the country.

As for the demand for higher education (the only effective instrument for ensuring Nigerians would ultimately replace British officials in crucial decision-making positions in the Nigerian government service) the response of the colonial administration constituted the most eloquent testimony to the fact that by the early 1930s the British, given the prevalent colonial ideology, would not readily contemplate the possibility of Nigerians playing more than subordinate roles in the affairs of their own country. The case of the Yaba Higher College which was formally opened in 1934, after it had operated for two years in temporary quarters, was symptomatic of the operation of this colonial ideology. In spite of the declarations of E.R.J. Hussey, the Director of Education for Nigeria, to the effect that the Yaba Higher College was envisaged to progress in three stages, over the indefinite future, to a full-fledged university with local autonomy,<sup>21</sup> the college was designed to provide in the foreseeable future only "well-trained" assistants to Europeans in the various government departments and commercial houses. In view of the fact that for several decades Nigerians with comparable academic qualifications to those demanded of entrants to Yaba Higher College had studied successfully in British universities to become medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, arts and science graduates, the Yaba Higher College graduated after four or more years' training (the length of a normal university course in Britain) only medical, engineering and other assistants. It is, therefore, justifiable to see the higher college project as a stratagem to postpone what must have appeared to the colonial officials as the unacceptable prospect of being displaced from their secure dominant position by Nigerians with a demonstrably comparable, if not better, qualification.

The attacks on the higher college project and the supporting demands made by representatives of the emergent Western educated elite in Lagos and the South, spearheaded by the Lagos (later Nigerian) Youth Movement, founded in 1934, threw into bold relief two uncompromising attitudes: deep-rooted determination to step into the shoes of the top European officials in government and commerce, and an equally strong desire to tie Nigerian educational standards to those obtaining in the metro-

21. This idea was restated in his memorandum NNA CSO 26, 29724 Encl. A to O.A.G.'s despatch No. 502, 25 October 1933.



politan country. For instance, at the inaugural meeting of the Lagos Youth Movement in 1934 speakers asserted that they wanted Yaba medical graduates to be able to replace expatriate medical officers who, according to them, "carried away Nigeria's money".<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in what might appear contradictory to their 'nationalist' position, Nigerian critics of Yaba Higher College were insisting either on a full-fledged university offering degrees that would be universally recognized,<sup>23</sup> or one that would be affiliated to Oxford, Cambridge or London University.<sup>24</sup> If it was impossible to make Yaba a university, then they demanded that the government should provide generous scholarships tenable overseas to compensate for facilities denied at home,<sup>25</sup> and, in the words of S.B. Rhodes, to qualify the recipients for internationally recognized certificates which would enable them to compete for employment in Nigeria and other areas of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Yaba Higher College project was not modified in spite of opposition from the Nigerian Youth Movement and other members of the Lagos élite, by the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s the campaign for the 'Africanization' of the colonial civil service gathered so much force that it could no longer be ignored. For instance, the document, "The Atlantic Charter and West Africa", presented by Nnamdi Azikiwe and seven other West African journalists to the Colonial Secretary during a goodwill mission to Britain in 1943, and a comprehensive memorial from the NYM to the Colonial Secretary in the same year both included among their key demands the Africanization of the civil service and the provision of more and better educational opportunities for Africans.<sup>27</sup>

These demands constituted a part of the global movement in the British colonial empire for the indigenization of the key institutions of government and the provision of appropriate educational facilities without which indigenes with the requisite training could not take over the running of their countries from the colonial officials and other expatriates. Two commissions—the Asquith Commission into university education in the British Empire and the Elliot Commission into the problem of university education specifically in West Africa—set up by the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, in 1943, amounted to at least a recognition in principle of the legitimacy of the demands being made by these colonial peoples. Although the two commissions reached the same general conclusion that all colonial territories able to support university institutions should have them, provided that their standards were comparable to those of British universities, the actual policy decision taken by the Colonial Office on the Elliot Commission clearly betrayed an official colonial unwillingness to use university education in West Africa as anything other than a mere symbolic and token gesture. The Colonial Office turned down the majority recommendation that two universities be established in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (Ghana)

22. *Daily Times*, 19 March 1934 and *Daily Telegraph* 20 March 1934.

23. *Daily Times*, 2 February 1934.

24. NNA CSO 26HC24121/53 Youth to C.S. 17 March 1934.

25. *Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 1934 and NNA NL/F2 Leg. Co. Debates, 5 February 1934, p. 16.

26. NNA NL/F2 Leg. Co. Debates, 3 December 1935, pp. 84-6.

27. J.S. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

and Fourah Bay College be developed into a third with limited objectives.<sup>28</sup> It, however, accepted the Minority Report which recommended only one university in Ibadan to serve the whole of the then British West Africa.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the most incontrovertible evidence of the authorities' reluctance to use university education in Nigeria as an instrument of genuine, as opposed to symbolic, decolonization was the extremely modest scale on which the University College of Ibadan was founded and its sluggish pace of development before independence—both out of all proportion to the available corps of young Nigerians with the requisite university entry requirements. Starting with a total student enrolment of barely 200 in 1948, its student population grew slowly to 1,024 in 1959, the year before the country attained independence.<sup>30</sup> If by 1960 Nigeria was not afflicted by the same kind of severe shortage of relatively well-trained manpower as Congo Kinshasha (Zaire), Malawi, and Tanzania at independence, it was not because the colonial government in Nigeria did not try its best to retard the country's manpower development, but rather because of the indomitable spirit of many Nigerians, individuals and communities who, at great cost to themselves, encouraged their sons and daughters to go to Europe and America for higher and professional education, which came to be known in popular Nigerian parlance as "the golden fleece".

One other major catalytic factor in the development of Western education was the demand for Africanizing the decision-making positions in all aspects of the nation's life. This campaign had been pioneered in the opening years of the 20th century by men like Bishops Ajayi Crowther and James (Holy) Johnson, and gathered increasing momentum in the post-World War II years.<sup>31</sup>

Starting with the initiative of the Governor, Sir John Macpherson who, in May-June 1948, appointed a commission under H.M. Foot "to make recommendations as to the steps to be taken for the execution of the declared policy of the Government of Nigeria to appoint Nigerians to posts in the Government Senior Service as fast as suitable candidates with the necessary qualifications come forward, with special reference to scholarships and training schemes",<sup>32</sup> the colonial government and its successor, the

38. NNA. CSO 41978 Vol. III Desp. No. 334 Colonial Office to Officer Administering the Government, Nigeria 1 October 1933.

29. The Government of the Gold Coast, however, decided to ignore the Colonial Office ruling on this issue and established its own university in Legon, Accra about the same time as the University College, Ibadan was founded.

30. Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education, *Statistics of Education in Nigeria*, 1963 (Lagos) Series No. 1, Vol. III, p. 29.

31. See Nigeria, *A Ten-Year Development Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria*, 1947: Sessional paper No. 24 of 1945 (Lagos, 1946) p. 2., where the colonial government made a half-hearted attempt to show that it was aware of this demand and was anxious to do something to meet it.

32. See Nigeria; *The Nigerianization of the Civil Service: A Review of Policy Machinery* by Sir Sydney Phillipson and Mr S.O. Adebo (Lagos) 1954, p. 5.

Balewa government, periodically returned to the problem, which for a long time appeared to defy solution.<sup>33</sup>

From 1958 onwards (especially after the publication of the interim and final reports of the Solaru-led Nigerianization Committee)<sup>34</sup> the pressure on the Federal Government to adopt a more vigorous and deliberate Nigerianization policy became increasingly irresistible. In consequence the Federal Government appointed the Ashby Commission in April 1959 "to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-School Certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years".<sup>35</sup> It is significant, however, that members of the commission in conducting their enquiry found it necessary to go beyond their terms of reference in two important respects: first, they attempted to forecast Nigeria's needs not only in post-School Certificate and Higher Education, but also in the overall educational system up to 1800; and second, they decided to conceive educational needs in terms of their correlation with economic development.<sup>36</sup> The main support for this second exercise was a report on "High-level Manpower for Nigeria's Future" prepared by Professor Harbison at the request of the commission in which he emphasized the shortage of high-level manpower as one of the two factors limiting rapid economic growth. The Ashby Commission report, incorporating Harbison's estimates of current and future high-level manpower needs in Nigeria, highlighted in a way never before done in Nigeria the critical need of the country for trained high calibre manpower. It at last succeeded in rousing the Federal Government from its stupor and gave further impetus to the regional governments to step up their manpower development programmes; so much so that the "Federal Government in accepting the Report of the Ashby Commission decided to regard Harbison's estimates as minimal".<sup>37</sup>

33. Among the efforts made in the 1950s to tackle the problem of the Nigerianization of the Government Senior Service were:

- (i) The Phillipson-Adebo Commission set up in March 1952 to review the policy of Nigerianization of the Civil Service and the machinery for its implementation and make recommendations. (See *Nigeria: The Nigerianization of the Civil Service: A Review of Policy Machinery* by Sydney Phillipson and S.O. Adebo (Lagos 1954).
- (ii) The appointment by the Governor-General in 1957 of a "Nigerianization Officer" (in the person of the same Sir Sydney Phillipson, soon replaced, however, under severe attack by Federal House of Representative Members by a Nigerian, Francis Nwokedi) with very limited advisory powers to co-ordinate the activities of the Federal Public Service Commission, the Scholarship Board and the Establishment Branch of the Chief Secretary's Office.
- (iii) The appointment on 25 March, 1958 by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of a five-man committee of the House of Representatives, headed by Chief T.T. Solaru, to study the problem of Nigerianization and make recommendations. (See *Nigeria: Views of the Government of the Federation on the Interim Report of the Committee on Nigerianization*, Houses of Representatives Sessional Paper No. 7, of 1958 (Lagos, 1958).

34. See footnote 33 (iii) above.

35. *Nigeria: Federal Government Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria, Investment in Education*. (The Ashby Report Report) (Lagos, 1960).

36. Ayo Ogunseye, *Education and Manpower*, A paper presented to the Conference on National Reconstruction and Development in Nigeria on 28th March, 1969 (Ibadan, NISER, 1969) p. 2.

37. M. Yesufu, "Nigerian Manpower Problems (A Preliminary Assessment)," the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3. (November, 1962), p. 217.

A direct outcome of the Ashby Commission Report was the big drive by all the governments of Nigeria to expand facilities for higher, secondary and technical education. Although development in the various sectors of the educational system was uneven, the overall growth rate in actual enrolments compared with the projected estimates was not unimpressive. For instance, whereas student enrolment at the University College Ibadan (the only university institution in Nigeria then) stood at 1,024 in 1959, by 1966/67 the total enrolment at Ibadan and the four new universities (at Zaria, Nsukka, Ife and Lagos) had reached 9,170 just a little short of the projected target of 9,400 for 1969/70.<sup>38</sup> In the same way enrolment in school certificate classes in all Nigerian secondary schools rose from 53,300 in 1960 to 149,000 in 1966, exceeding the projection for the latter year by almost 23,000.<sup>39</sup> The increase in enrolments in sixth form classes was even more impressive, rising from 899 in 1960 to 5,512 in 1966 topping the projection for 1966 by almost 2,000.<sup>40</sup> There have, however, been significant shortfalls in the actual enrolments relative to plan projections in some sectors of the educational system, pre-eminently in technical education all over the country and primary education in the northern states, and even in the eastern states and the west, where the initial enthusiasm generated by the Universal Primary Education programmes of the mid-1950s has begun to be eroded by the frustrated hopes of hordes of half-educated juveniles.<sup>41</sup>

An intriguing feature of the vigorous campaign of the 1950s and 1960s for the Nigerianization of the top administrative, professional and managerial posts in government and business, and for the expansion of training facilities for 'high-calibre manpower' was that it was essentially politically motivated. It was an important strand of the national liberation movement, especially as the more articulate members of the emergent Nigerian élite came to stress again and again the futility and hollowness of the promised political independence unless the key decision-making positions were effectively filled by Nigerian nationals. This limited élitist political objective would appear to be primarily responsible for the critical structural defects and imbalances that now bedevil the Nigerian educational system. What is more important, these defects and imbalances have had far-reaching social consequences for the country at large. In the first instance, apart from élitist view popularized by Eric Ashby and Harbison concerning the crucial importance of the availability of adequate high-level manpower for rapid economic development, there does not appear to be any serious attempt by educational and economic planners in Nigeria to work out a comprehensive educational programme, underpinned by a development-oriented philosophy and values and fully integrated with a rational plan of social and economic development for the whole country. One major consequence of this policy of drift and patchwork is the lack of articulation between primary education, which is fast becoming accessible to the mass of Nigerian children, and the higher levels of the

38. A.A. Akiwowo et al., *Economic and Social Survey, 1958 to 1968*, Paper presented to the Conference on National Reconstruction and Development in Nigeria, March 25th 1969 (Ibadan, NISER, 1969) p. 82.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 76 See also Ayo Ogunsheye, *op. cit.*, p. 8

41. See *Ibid.*, p. 73 Table 8. 1 for figures of primary school enrolments and Ayo Ogunsheye, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.



educational system (especially secondary grammar schools and universities), which are closed to all but a handful of young Nigerians mainly because most families are too poor to pay the high fees. Apart from the colossal waste of human resources inherent in an educational system that favours *ability to pay* at the expense of *ability to learn*, there is the other more serious waste arising from the fact that the bulk of primary school leavers, lacking any skill (except marginal literacy) are thrown, at the tender age of eleven to thirteen, on an employment market that is becoming increasingly glutted and unable to absorb them. Those responsible for planning primary school curricula in Nigeria do not seem to have fully grasped the fact that for most school-going children the primary school is the terminal stage of their formal education. As such their training at this level should not only equip them with the ability to read and write, but should also provide them with the ability to earn a living in productive enterprise.

Even in the expansion of facilities for university and professional education the planners seem to have been operating on the basis of statistical data which have no relationship whatsoever with the real manpower needs of the country. What is even more staggering, because of the lack of effective articulation of economic with educational planning, and because there are no reliable statistical data, the manpower needs of the public and, especially, the private sectors of the economy cannot be accurately predicted on a long-term basis and, therefore, cannot be met by controlled programming. Consequently Nigeria's universities and other higher institutions of learning have been training at great cost to the public substantial numbers of higher-calibre manpower—in fields like agriculture, engineering, the arts and social sciences—many of whom cannot find relevant employment. The incidence of graduate engineers and agriculturists who are sometimes discriminated against by the foreign-dominated private sector of the economy, who cannot be absorbed by the public services, and therefore have to teach the basic sciences in grammar schools, has become a standing joke in a country, whose main strength lies in an agriculture badly in need of modernization, and which is still heavily dependent on foreign technical personnel for running its embryonic industry and for effectuating its public construction programmes. The National Manpower Board, set up by the Federal Government in 1962, in the pious belief that for rapid economic progress, "manpower planning, training and effective utilization must receive continuous consideration",<sup>42</sup> has not yet shown that its considerations have brought any rationality into the confused state of manpower development and utilization in the country. One has to recognize, however, that the Manpower Board is confronted with a congeries of knotty problems, some of which are not of its own making, like the notorious lack of up-to-date and reliable statistical data and the tradition of isolationist sectoral planning in the country. The board itself was perceptive enough to have recognized from the very beginning that the value of its contribution to the effective development and exploitation of Nigeria's manpower resources, and the utility of its research reports "will lie in the extent to which its guidelines are accepted and acted upon by all

42. Nigeria, National Manpower Board, *Nigeria's High Level Manpower 1963-70; Manpower Study No. 2*, (Lagos, 1964), p. 1.



concerned—particularly the Governments, Universities and other educational and training institutions, as well as by private industry".<sup>43</sup>

### Western Education, the Colonial Economy and the Emerging Nigerian Society

The dissemination of Western literary education in Nigeria has had an impact of a revolutionary character, out of all proportion to its spread among the population, on the course of development of the Nigerian society. Like Christianity to which it was closely allied at the beginning and with which it is still substantially linked in many parts of the country, it tended to create a dichotomous relationship between the traditional values and mores of the people and those being peddled by its champions. Western education, especially the variety of it provided in missionary institutions, was from the very beginning aimed at subverting the indigenous cultures of the people regarded as primitive and sinful and at producing young men and women thoroughly immersed in the supposedly superior European Christian culture. Consequently, traditional ritual songs, dances, drama, games and art were all condemned by the missionary teachers as pagan, while the curriculum bristled with Bible reading, history of European activities, the singing of European songs and the study of English literary classics.

It, however, happened that there was no community in the country that was entirely free from the determined efforts of both the missionaries and the colonial government to make black Englishmen out of Nigerian school children. The government-owned secondary grammar schools, like King's College, Lagos, Government College, Ibadan, Katsina College (now Barewa College), Government College, Umuahia, to mention only a few, were among the most outstanding for the vigour with which they inculcated British middle-class values into their pupils. Apart from their teaching staffs which were predominantly British in composition, the ethos in these schools was essentially that of the British public school, their repertoire of games including such blatantly middle-and upper-class games like cricket, tennis, and (in the case of Katsina College) polo and fives. That this kind of colonial acculturation could and did have a multiplying effect is demonstrated by the widening community of polo players among top Nigerian military officers irrespective of whether they passed through the gates of Katsina College or not.

Furthermore, in spite of the initial resistance in the Muslim emirates to Western education which was equated with *Nasaranci* (i.e., Christianity) and Lugard's promise in 1903 not to tamper with their Islamic religion and tradition, the 20th century emirate society was progressively subjected through education to a peculiar, but no less effective, variety of Westernization. It has been suggested that

in order to encourage Muslim parents to send their children to Western schools, Koranic education was included in the school curriculum. This has become a permanent feature of all government owned primary as well as secondary schools all over the former Northern Nigeria.<sup>44</sup>

43. Ibid., p. 23.

44. Haroun al-Rashid Adamu, op. cit., p. 56.

The existence of this practice is confirmed by Yusufu Usman especially in relation to its "great significance in the growth of the Northern (Westernized élite". Usman claims that the British developed in the North, starting with Katsina College, educational institutions which produced people into whom was inculcated "a British outlook on government, education, world affairs, economics, etc., but who remained Moslems in their religious worship".<sup>45</sup>

This Westernizing programme of the British has had serious implications for the social and cultural identity of many Nigerian communities. This is because children sent to Western-type schools have been denied the full opportunity (sometimes from the age of five or six) of acquiring other forms of training, which are more relevant for a rounded and properly integrated role in the cultural setting into which they were born. The result is that there is generally an inverse ratio between the level of academic attainment and knowledge of such things as family and lineage traditions, folk music, dances and games, which is automatically acquired in a purely indigenous milieu. This, no doubt, has produced a situation in which many highly educated Nigerians are torn between two cognitive and cultural worlds, neither of which they fully understand and identify with—a situation which poses serious problems of authenticity for the individuals concerned and which makes cultural survival for the various Nigerian communities more difficult.

One other significant way in which Western education has radically affected the development of the Nigerian society is in its disruption of the pre-colonial social structure and distribution of political power in the various communities. During the era of British colonial rule in Nigeria, the necessities of running an effective administration and establishing a colonial money economy compelled the colonial authorities to depend less and less on the 'traditional' ruling authorities—emirs, obas and chiefs of different categories—and work more and more with the new men equipped with a measure of Western literary education. Furthermore, because it was the educated elements that spearheaded the anti-colonialist movement of the 1930s to the 1950s thereby displacing the traditional rulers as the spokesman of the people, they came to be accepted by the departing colonial authorities as their political successors. The result was that from 1952 when the principle of majority African rule became established, a new élite of Western-educated Nigerians assumed a preponderant position in all the key institutions of political control in the country—the regional and central legislatures and executive councils, the public services, the security forces and the judiciary.<sup>46</sup> Even though peasant cultivators still constitute the overwhelming majority in the Nigerian society, colonial educational, economic and administrative policies have brought into being a whole complex of new social groups, engaged in wage labour or commerce, but highly differentiated in terms of level of education and incomes. These new groups, like the élite, operate in the modern sector of the

45. Private correspondence with Mallam Yusufu B. Usman of the A.B.U., Department of History, Zaria.

46. See S.O. Osoba, *The Nigerian 'Power' Elite, 1952-65: A Study in Some Problems of Social Change*, Paper presented to the 16th Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, December 1970 (Mimeographed).

economy and have become largely freed from control by the 'traditional' political authorities.

One other significant consequence of the growth of Western education in Nigeria is the acquisition by a growing corps of Nigerians of new technical and professional skills whether in typical Western-style institutions or under the indigenous apprenticeship system (a pre-colonial form of education), which had itself undergone some significant modifications under the impact of Western education and British colonial economy. As the colonial economy expanded it generated demands for all kinds of skilled personnel ranging from engineers to motor mechanics, plumbers, and welders. It is a tribute to the flexibility and adaptability of the indigenous apprenticeship system that it was able with increasing effectiveness, as the educational system produced a growing number of literate adolescents, to cope with the training of Nigerians in a large variety of strange foreign skills. For instance, it is a fair assertion to make that the motor transport system (in the passenger, road haulage and private car-owner sectors) would not have been able to operate even at its not too high level of efficiency, but for the hordes of Nigerian mechanics, vulcanizers, panel-beaters, welders and auto-electricians ('rewire' in popular parlance) usually working with a few simple tools and in ramshackled, sometimes open-door establishments scattered all over the major Nigerian urban centres. This positive development cannot, however, obscure the fact that, the decades of Western education in Nigeria notwithstanding, the Nigerian society still operates on a very low level of technological and organizational efficiency. It would appear that in recent years the systematized training and utilization of technical personnel has not kept pace with the rate of capital investment of infrastructural facilities. This would, at least partly, account for the pan-Nigerian peculiarity of electricity and water supplies that are notorious for their unpredictability, telephones that in many towns are more objects of decoration than instruments of communication and a transportation system (railway, air and road) that is a constant source of frustration for people who want to operate in the speedy, business-like style characteristic of the technological age.

The extent and character of urban existence is, perhaps, one of the most important social developments that have been most radically affected by the injection of British colonial rule and economy and Western type education into the indigenous Nigerian setting. Before 1900, only the Yoruba kingdoms had a degree of urbanization comparable to that obtaining in some of the so-called developed countries of Europe. The Muslim emirates of Northern Nigeria were a very distant second to Yorubaland, and there was hardly any appreciable level of urbanization anywhere else in the territorial expanse that was to become Nigeria. However, the necessities of effective colonial administration and the promotion of Anglo-Nigerian trade prompted the British colonial government in Nigeria to take a series of measures that were to have significant consequences for the pattern of urban development in the country.

As a result of the operation of the British colonial system with its inputs of a new transportation system (rail, road and ports), an export-oriented economy and a new network of administrative centres, which did not often coincide with the pre-colonial centres of political power and influence, the rate and pattern of growth of urbanization under colonial rule diverged significantly from what obtained in pre-

colonial times.<sup>47</sup> For example, as a result of the operation of the colonial government's Township Ordinance of 1917, some selected towns relevant to the functioning of colonial administration and, in some cases only recently created by it, were put into three categories in descending order of significance. Lagos, which was the seat of the colonial government, the main port and railway terminal and having by far the largest share of European immigrant population in Nigeria was the only first class township until the end of World War II when the Ordinance was overtaken by new constitutional developments. Second class townships consisted principally of large centres of trade, located either along the railway line or on the coast. In 1919 there were eighteen such townships (twelve in the Southern Provinces and six in the North), but by 1936 their number had been reduced to twelve (seven in the South and five in the North). This category did not include even those large population centres and repositories of significant political power and influence in pre-colonial times like Sokoto, Benin, Ijebu-Ode, Oyo, simply because they did not fit significantly into the colonial transportation and export-trade systems. They were, therefore, designated third class townships (apart from Oyo which was not even classed at all) along with forty-seven other towns, making fifty in all by 1919. These townships were described as "government stations, with a small but mixed population", a description that clearly betrays government's obsessive concern with administrative imperatives, but is palpably false in the case of places like Ife, Ijebu-Ode, Benin, Sokoto, Bida, Agbor, Ondo and Arochuku, which were all relatively old, pre-colonial and considerable centres of population, trade, political power and culture.<sup>48</sup>

One of the most significant ways in which the operation of the Township Ordinance of 1917 affected the character of Nigerian urban centres was through the distribution of modern social amenities which Professor Mabogunje with characteristic *not just* described as "governmental amenities".<sup>49</sup> This is apparently because these amenities tended to be provided in towns that served as important administrative centres, with substantial expatriate colonial officials in the British colonial system. For instance, by 1936 there were twelve European and fifty-six African hospitals, located predominantly in towns classed first, second and third. The provision of water and electricity supply followed the same pattern: by 1950, Lagos (first class), eleven second class towns, five third class and two unclassified towns (Oshogbo and Ilorin) had public pipe-borne water supply systems. In the same year public electricity installations were available in twenty towns—one first class, twelve second, three third class and four unclassified towns (Katsina, Yola, Vom and Bukuru).<sup>50</sup>

47. See, S.O. Osoba, *The Nigerian 'Power' Elite, 1952-65: Background to Nigerian Nationalism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963) p. 76, table 8 which reveals that between 1921 and 1952 the rates of development by increase in the population of selected major urban centres were as follows:

Easter Region (688 %); New urban centres in the North—Gusau, Kaduna, Jos and Minna—(522 %); Lagos (168 %), Traditional urban centres in the North (122 %) and Yoruba West (122 %).

48. See Akin I. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (London: University of London Press, 1968) p. 113.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.



This categorization of Nigerian towns under the 1917 Township Ordinance and the policy actions that flowed from it have brought about significant differentiation in the availability of modern facilities which are basic to satisfactory urban life first, among the three classes of towns and second, between them and the vast majority of unclassified urban centres. What is even more significant, a trend, which is still very much with us, was initiated whereby the provision of such modern amenities tend to be concentrated in urban centres (the volume and quality often varying in direct proportion to their relative administrative importance) and to the almost total exclusion of the rural communities. This kind of discriminatory practice has, over time, contributed substantially to a skewed pattern of development which has, in turn, become a crucial factor in the escalating phenomenon of migration of personnel from minor to major urban centres and from rural areas to both kinds of urban centres.

The problem of imbalance in the development of different categories of towns and between towns and villages has, in the view of Mabogunje, been compounded by the recent proliferation of "parasitic towns", among which a significant number is made up of the "home towns" of influential political decision-makers, who saw to it that "scarce infrastructural investments (e.g., on electricity and water supplies, medical and para-medical centres, access roads and, even in one case, a church building belonging to a Christian sect—ours) were diverted".<sup>51</sup> Such action, no doubt, tended to happen in clear discrimination against other towns with greater potential capacity for generating higher levels of quantitative and qualitative economic productivity. Understandably, one of the main consequences of this state of affairs is the emergence of "numerous urban communities which cannot support themselves or maintain their facilities and institutions in a tolerable state of efficiency".<sup>52</sup> The overall Nigerian urban scene is replete with examples of town streets that are in a terrible state of dilapidation, electricity and water supplies that break down constantly because the town authorities lack the financial or technical manpower resources to keep them in an operative state, hospitals and maternity centres that are terribly congested, short-staffed, ill-equipped and badly run, and town libraries that are libraries only in name. Such towns, lacking the employment opportunities and technical efficiency to meet the rising expectations of their young Western-educated people tend to lose most of them to more viable urban centres, thereby suffering a further decline in their own productive potential.

Because of the colonial and post-colonial policy of concentrating development in the few urban centres of administration and commerce, there has been an increasing tendency throughout this century for people with any measure of Western education to migrate from the rural communities to the major urban centres in search of wage employment, which they consider more remunerative and secure than the back-breaking exercise of farming with primitive implements. This phenomenon of rural-urban migration, characterized by the colonial Commissioner for Labour in Nigeria in 1943 as "the flight to towns",<sup>53</sup> has assumed increasingly frightful proportions as the explosion in education has moved apace, with far-reaching

51. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Nigeria, *Annual Report on the Department of Labour for 1943* (Lagos) p. 3.



consequences both for the rural and urban communities. Its main disruptive impact on the rural areas is manifested in the progressive impoverishment of the communities not only in material terms, but also in the sense that they have been losing to the towns an increasing proportion of their most enlightened and enterprising members who, if it were possible for them to stay behind, might have made significant contributions to the improvement of rural life and economy. Consequently a situation has arisen in which the ratio of middle-aged and elderly people to youths has been changing progressively in the direction of a preponderance of the former over the latter in the rural communities, whereas the reverse is the case in the urban centres.<sup>54</sup>

The 'flight to towns' has, over the years, created a critical problem for the urban centres. For one thing, the populations of the major towns have grown far beyond their capacity effectively to absorb the influx of immigrants physically and psychologically.<sup>55</sup> Among the main indicators of the low absorptive capacities of these towns are the high incidence of unemployment, marginal employment and begging, the chronic shortage and prohibitive cost of housing, the scandalous congestion of the residential areas and the proliferation of unsightly and insanitary slums<sup>56</sup> — ideal breeding grounds for endemic diseases as the outbreak of cholera epidemic in Nigeria in 1970/71 tragically established. The combination of these harsh living and working conditions for immigrants into the large urban centres has tended to produce a considerable degree of instability and insecurity among the generality of urban dwellers, especially among the so-called stranger elements, who have the most critical problems of housing and gainful employment. In a situation where too few jobs and houses are being chased by too many people, the 'sons of the soil' tend to resent the foreigner who, either by virtue of his superior skill or his contacts, manages to secure a substantial job and a decent house. The 'strangers' on their part tend to resent what they regard as the hostile and inhospitable attitude of their hosts, which often forces them to live precariously on the fringes of the urban communities to which they have moved. This problem of adjustment for an immigrant into a new urban milieu is more traumatic for the less educated, less skilled and poorer-paid 'stranger' elements for whom there is a real crisis of identity. It is highly probable that it was the search for identity in an environment which they considered essentially hostile and inhospitable, that drove some of the 'stranger' elements in Lagos (like the Ibibio, Igbo, Urhobo) to form in the 1930s the ethnically based and oriented 'progressive' unions, which later spread all over the country.

The socio-psychological problems of the urban migrant population working and living away from 'home' constitute an aspect of a much larger social phenomenon in 20th century Nigeria — the changing nature of the indigenous extended family system or lineage and the growing importance of an individualist ethos compelling more and more people to fend for themselves outside the framework of a tightly knit lineage system. Admittedly this phenomenon has been more significant and noticeable in

54. See S.O. Osoba, 'The Phenomenon of Labour Migration in the Era of British Colonial Rule: A Neglected Aspect of Nigeria's Social History', *J.H.S.N.*, Vol. IV, No. 4 (June, 1969) pp. 531-2.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 533-38.

56. See Akin L. Mabogunje, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-202 and 225f.

urban centres than in rural communities, its inexorable forward march on a pan-Nigerian scale cannot, however, be denied. Since an increasing number of people have been migrating from home in search of salaried and wage employment, or moving into the relatively more remunerative cash-crop agriculture, the head of the extended family has tended to suffer a progressive decline in his authority and control. The control mechanism of the head within the family derived in a purely indigenous setting from the powers he exercised over the family land (with all the mystique and religious observances identified with it) at a time when virtually every member of the family sustained himself and his immediate dependants by cultivating farm land mainly for food crops. The cohesiveness of the extended family has been the main victim of this development.

This process of disintegration has not been helped at all by the frequent incidence of a significant differentiation in educational and income levels within the extended family. The process of change, identified in the traditional sector of Ibadan by Mabogunje as "growth by fission" resulting in a breakdown not only in the control-mechanism within the extended family, but also in the physical embodiment of that family—the compound<sup>57</sup>—is a process taking place in all Nigerian communities, urban or rural, albeit in varying degrees. This is largely because the more Westernized and affluent members of the extended family (living at "home or abroad") tend to become dissatisfied with the communal living in the compound, that makes the preservation of individual or nuclear family privacy difficult, if not impossible. Furthermore, the desire for privacy also often goes with the acquired taste for more comfortable and sanitary living conditions, the provision of which on a compound-wide basis is often beyond the means of the less educationally and financially 'successful'. Hence this process of hiving off has become increasingly manifested by the breaking up of the integrated family compound into separate units, by some members pulling out of the compound completely to build their own separate houses either on unoccupied neighbouring family land or in entirely different sections of the town or village.

While this progressive disintegration of the extended family structure is everywhere observable, there is, however, still a significant measure of residual social interaction and co-operation among the separate physical units that have hived off from the original family compound. Funerals, births, marriages, chieftaincy installations, etc. are among the most usual occasions for this new kind of 'togetherness'. For members of the family, working far away from home and forcibly acculturated into the values of an aggressively competitive urban milieu, it is, however, more difficult or financially inconvenient or both to return home every time there is a big family affair. Consequently, the ethnic and sub-ethnic value in minimizing the socio-psychological problems of the 'stranger' elements in big urban centres. The best of them (through frequent meetings and entertainments, financial advances to newly arrived immigrants and members in trouble, assistance with securing employment for jobless members, etc.) helped to ease the transition from one world of communal ethos and collective security to another one of narrow individualism and aggressive competitive.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

ness. However, from the late 1940s and early 1950s (with the emergence of ethnically-based political parties, each poised for action to maximize its advantage within the changing power structure in the Nigerian political system), they increasingly became major carriers of the virus of ethnic chauvinism and separatism that has plagued the country ever since and has seriously undermined efforts to create a viable and homogeneous Nigerian nation.<sup>58</sup>

Yet another manifestation of the basic insecurity of urban life for the poorer and middle-grade urban dwellers is the preponderance of such people in schismatic pentecostal Christian sects, like the Aladura, which offer quick magical solutions to their health, psychological and career problems that they cannot solve otherwise. This is understandable in view of their restricted access to modern medical facilities and to rapid advance in their careers, either because of their limited education and financial resources or lack of contact with those powerful influential people who could change their fortune.<sup>59</sup> The ones who find psychological and spiritual satisfaction in the schismatic Christian churches could be considered lucky in some of the urban jungles that have emerged in Nigeria in recent times. Those in the most unenviable positions are the ones who are materially down and out and are psychologically and spiritually alienated from the society in which they live. These often become mental wrecks and quickly deteriorate into unwanted scraps of humanity. The growing number of lunatics roaming the street of some of Nigeria's largest cities, and for whom nobody apparently seems to care, is symptomatic of the alarming rate at which unprogrammed and chaotic urban development in Nigeria is mutilating and dehumanizing people who could otherwise have been assets to the society.

Taking into consideration Mabogunje's monumental contribution to the study of Nigerian urbanization and the generally penetrating nature of his analysis, it is more than strange that, operating on the innocuous assumption that by 1952 "in spite of the persistence of strong regional contrasts, the British had largely succeeded in welding Nigeria into a single economic entity", he then proceeds to make such a dubious assertion:

Given this fact, any understanding of urbanization in Nigeria must regard the towns and cities as forming a spatial system whose individual units interacted amongst themselves and reacted with the rural areas to promote the economic development of the country.<sup>60</sup>

First, this apparently coherent spatial system postulated by Mabogunje is at best a ragged system, given the virtual isolation of many marginal towns and most villages from this 'system' owing to their problem of inaccessibility deriving from the fragility, or almost total non-existence of a transportation grid to serve them. His seminal study

58. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Olusegun Osoba, "Ideological Trends in the Nigerian National Liberation Movement and the Problems of National Identity, Solidarity and Motivation, 1964-65; A Preliminary Assessment", *IBADAN*, No. 27 (October 1969), pp. 26-28.

59. See S.O. Osoba, "Fascinating but largely Speculative"—a review of D.B. Barret, in *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968) in *ORITA*, Vol. IV/1 (June 1970) pp. 67-8.

60. Akin L. Mabogunje, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

of Nigerian urbanization, clearly does not substantiate his allegation that the reaction between this spatial system of urban centres and the rural areas has promoted the economic development of the country. Unless 'economic development' is used to connote such arid statistical economic notions as GNP, GDP, balance of payments position and level of foreign exchange reserve, then it is meaningless. In the context of a situation of a crisis-ridden urban sector, characterized by a high level of unemployment and marginal employment, congestion, squalor and criminality and a preponderant rural peasant population that is getting progressively impoverished, Mabogunje's statement about the 'economic development' of the country seems to fly in the face of irrefutable evidence that he is only too well aware of.

Apart from dichotomizing the urban communities socially and widening the gulf between the urban and rural communities in terms of material development, the uneven growth of educational facilities in the country has produced a vicious and dangerous differentiation from one geographical area to another, especially between the northern and southern states,<sup>61</sup> in the availability of high-calibre manpower to fill the highly prized 'European' posts that were becoming accessible in the era of scrambled Nigerianization. This was a significant factor in the unwillingness of the northern Nigerian elite to be rushed into independence by their southern counterparts in 1953, especially when it was clear to them that, in view of the substantial southern lead in terms of the numbers of Western-educated high-level manpower, the North was bound to play a subordinate role in running an independent Nigeria. Their defensive response of Northernization of their public service (sometimes crudely formulated as 'North for Northerners') at a time when the dominant campaign in the South was for Nigerianization was interpreted by many of their southern opponents, perhaps with too little empathy and realism, as subversive of national unity and the anti-imperialist struggle. The heart of the problem is that given the high status and considerable power attached to top decision-making jobs in government, and the unequal distribution, on ethnic and regional lines, of people with the requisite qualifications to acquire these jobs, those ethnic groups and geographical areas which

61. It should, however, be pointed out that this phenomenon of uneven development is multifaceted. Apart from the North-South gap, there are other significant forms of disparity within each of these geographical areas (e.g. Ilorin and Kabba provinces versus Sokoto, Kano and Katsina provinces; or Onitsha versus Abakaliki divisions in Igboland or the Igbo areas versus the Ijo areas of the Delta, or Abeokuta, Ijebu and lately Ondo provinces versus Oyo province in Yorubaland). There is also a general disparity (in favour of men) between the number and level of attainment of educated men and women—a disparity that is most staggering in the emirate societies of the north. The exceptionally sluggish pace of the growth of female education in the Muslim north has been attributed to a number of factors, the most significant of which are (i) the peculiar Islamic marriage customs that permit girls to be married off between the ages of eleven and twelve, and then allow them to be confined, under the purdah system to *kulle* in a state of almost total isolation not only from the mainstream of formal school education, but also from any significant participation in the social and economic life of their community; and (ii) the lukewarm support for the education of women by the political decision-makers, reflected in their own personal examples (for instance the late Prime Minister of Nigeria, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, was reported by the Nigerian press sometime in the 1960's to have married one of his daughters off at the tender age of thirteen to his friend, Yakubu Wanka, former Director of the Central Bank of Nigeria) and in the paucity of post-primary institutions for women. [See Haroun al-Rashid Adamu, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-42 especially pp. 39-42]



consider themselves disadvantaged vis-à-vis others have tended to adopt chauvinistic measures or clamoured for autonomy to safeguard themselves from being dominated by representatives of those they regard as rivals, or even in some cases as enemies.<sup>62</sup> There is no doubt that politically ambitious ethnic élites have, in the past, inspired and exploited this fear of domination—whether in the Hausa-Fulani north vis-à-vis southerners (especially the Igbo and Yoruba) or among the Efik, Ibibio, Ijo in relation to the Igbo in the old Eastern Region, or among the Igbo, Edo, Ijo, Urhobo vis-à-vis the Yoruba in the old Western Region—to foster the idea of ethnic or regional separatism and thereby create considerable instability in the Nigerian society. The apparent intractability of this problem of an educational gap between various sections of the Nigerian population would seem to have produced in the last few years the advocacy in some influential quarters of the adoption of a 'quota system' in the rationing of educational resources and in the implementation of admission policies to federal and state-owned educational institutions.

One by-product of Christian missionary activity, colonial rule and Western-type education in Nigeria is the introduction to sections of the Nigerian society of the Western variety of medical and health care. Understandably, Nigerian communities, prior to their increasing contact with the Christian missionaries in the 19th century and their forcible subjugation to British political control in the opening years of the 20th century, had evolved over time various techniques of dealing with different kinds of human diseases. In many pre-colonial Nigerian communities medical and health care was a more or less specialized occupation practised by specially trained people who combined knowledge of herbal cure with powers of divination and mediation between the patient and supernatural forces (like one's ancestors or malevolent gods, witches and wizards) believed to be capable of afflicting people with ill health or even death. This dual approach to the practice of medicine is grounded on the dominant cosmological outlook of the Nigerian peoples, which recognizes a more operative and direct relationship between the physical world of people and observable objects and the spiritual world of ancestors and divine entities, than the global religions of Islam and Christianity can accommodate. It should, however, be stressed that one of the consequences of the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the first two decades of the 19th century was the relative decline of the use of divination in medical care and the spread of medical practices more in accord with Islamic orthodoxy like those of the *wombai*, accompanying the Hausa armies like the modern military red cross, or the *gozan* (barber-surgeons) of the Nupe. The jihadist influence notwithstanding, the Hausa-Fulani societies (especially the non-Islamic Hausa, the Maguzawa) had the equivalents of the Yoruba *adahunse* or *balawalo* and the Igbo *dibia*—the survival of the *Bori* divination cults in many rural Hausa communities is a case in point.

62. It is only within this framework of analysis that the position of the Northern élite vis-à-vis Nigerianization can be seen in its proper perspective. As early as 15th December, 1948, in an editorial comment on Nigerianization, the Kaduna weekly *Gaskiya Ta fi Kwabo* argues thus with uncompromising frankness:

For the South, this is a happy turn of events, while in the North it is the opposite. If one thinks a little, one would understand why this (Nigerianization) instead of bringing joy to the heart of Northerners, has brought sadness. [See *ibid.*, p. 147]



Given the intimate relationship between indigenous Nigerian health care and the people's religious beliefs, and the fact that the early pioneers of Western medicine in Nigeria were Christian missionaries, it is understandable that, initially, like Western education, Western medical practice ran against strong psychological and cultural barriers among the Nigerian people. However, as the Christian missions became more firmly entrenched in the South and colonial rule became a reality all over the country, more Nigerians in the 20th century came in contact with Western medicine and came to accept its superiority in coping with certain varieties of diseases. It is, however, true that the history of the Nigerian medical service (under the umbrella of the colonial government and run by it in collaboration with various missionary bodies) is a checkered one and is, perhaps, one of the main supporting arguments for the viewpoint that the British were not so much concerned with the welfare of Nigerians as with relieving them of the wealth of their land.

Figures of the growth of hospitals in Nigeria between 1895 and 1960 are very revealing. In 1895 there was only one hospital located at Abeokuta (The Sacred Heart Hospital belonging to the Roman Catholic Mission). The number climbed sluggishly to 17 by 1914, the year of amalgamation, to 157 with total bed accommodation of 9,428 by 1951, just before the introduction of majority African rule and cabinet government, and then rapidly to 306 disposing of 30,000 beds in 1960, the year of independence. It is obvious from these figures that the Nigerian political decision-makers, limited as their decision-making authority was, did more in the eight years from 1952 to 1960 for the provision of new medical facilities (149 new hospitals and 10,572 beds) than the colonial government did in the preceding thirty-seven years, 1914-1951, (140 hospitals and about 9,178 beds). It should, however, be noted that throughout the colonial period the Christian missionary contribution to the provision of medical facilities was considerable and by the 1950s was almost at par with government contribution (in 1960 there were 131 government and 110 missionary hospitals). With the substantial increase in the number of qualified Nigerian doctors (produced overseas from the late 19th century, at Yaba Higher College between 1934 and 1948 and subsequently at the University College, Ibadan), the number of private hospitals which remained one from 1906 to 1948 steadily climbed to sixty-five in 1960.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, by 1960 there were only 1,079 registered medical doctors practising throughout Nigeria.<sup>64</sup> When we relate this figure and that of 306 hospitals with 20,000 beds serving a population of between 50 and 60 million, then we can see how backward the Nigerian medical service was and its marginality to the well being of the Nigerian people. Several implications flow from this situation of acute scarcity. Doctors and para-medical personnel in government hospitals tended to be overwhelmed by patients, most of whom they either did not bother to see or gave scant and perfunctory attention. Long queues and interminable waiting by patients, coupled with rude short-tempered behaviour among varying categories of hospital workers (from ward attendants to doctors) have become the main distinguishing characteristics

63. Figures culled from Ralph Schram, *A History of the Nigerian Health Services*, (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1971) Appendices 6 and 7 pp. 429-432.

64. *Ibid.*, Appendix 8, p. 433.

of government hospitals. Many government doctors, taking advantage of this crisis situation, have tended to divert patients from government hospitals to their own private clinics, or charge patients treated with government hospital facilities and during normal working hours private fees in addition to the normal hospital fees. This problem has become so all-pervading and so uncontrollable that when it was raised in the Federal House of Representatives in April 1962, the only explanation that the Hon. Federal Minister of Health could give the House was:

... the truth is that our medical services are at present hopeless inadequate and when a commodity of service is inadequate, there is bound to build around it a black market.<sup>65</sup>

For one thing, this scarce hospital care is largely concentrated in the big urban centres, most of whose poor low-paid inhabitants have limited or no access to it. Consequently, there has emerged in many towns an army of quack doctors peddling various forms of dangerous or dud drugs as instant remedies for all diseases under the sun. The private practice of pharmaceutical and nursing professions in the towns has also acquired a peculiar Nigerian character dictated by this problem of inaccessibility to hospitals and registered doctors. Many pharmacists consult with patients in their chemist shops, make prescriptions for all forms of illness and sell across the counter poisonous drugs that should not ordinarily be sold without a doctor's prescription. Some nurses in private practice, apart from operating as if they were qualified doctors, even sometimes attempt complex surgical operations which occasionally end in disaster.

The rural situation is even more grim, since most villages are not located within striking distance of a hospital, dispensary or maternity centre. Consequently, most villages, except in extreme emergency situations, do not seek medical attention other than what the local herbalist or the peripatetic quack doctor with his inevitable injection has to offer. The remarkable capability of indigenous medicine to survive and its enduring vitality can be explained largely by the fact that it forms "for many of the more remote parts of Nigeria still the sole medical care available, and for all the country the first line of defence against disease in a great proportion of the people even in the nineteen sixties".<sup>66</sup>

It should, however, be stressed in fairness to the several generations of devoted workers in the Nigerian medical services—doctors, nurses, sanitary inspectors, missionaries and laity—that through the combined efforts of missionary leprosy settlements, the establishment of infectious diseases hospitals (IDH) and Medical Field Units by government in the inter war years endemic and epidemic diseases like leprosy, smallpox, yaws, sleeping sickness and tuberculosis have been largely brought under control by treating the patients in isolated environments and hospitals and, in the case of smallpox, additionally by mass immunization.<sup>67</sup>

65. Nigeria: *Federal House of Representatives Debates*, 9/4/62, 1962/63 Vol. II Col. 1145.

66. Ralph Schram, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

67. *Ibid.*, chap. 4, pp. 230-245.

The gradual fitful process by which the British legal and judicial systems have been superimposed on the various indigenous systems of law and justice has been succinctly and graphically discussed by Professor T.N. Tamuno in another chapter of this book.<sup>68</sup> Our concern here, therefore, is to assess the impact of the British legal judicial systems on the indigenous concepts and practice of law and justice; the relationship of uneasy wedding, sometimes of conflict, between the two and the implications of this relationship for the popular Nigerian attitude to law and justice. First of all, the half-hearted attempts of the British colonial administration in this century to harmonize the administration of justice by establishing a hierarchy of courts, broadly divided into 'native' or 'customary' courts (including district, provincial and *alkali* courts) and British-style courts (including magistrate, high and supreme courts), produced a highly bureaucratized judicial system, subject to the needs of a so-called *pax-Britannica*, without achieving the desired objective of a viable synthesis of indigenous and British notions and practice of justice. Part of the explanation for this gap between pronouncement and action was the supercilious racist attitude with which the pioneers of colonial rule in Nigeria approached the cultures of the Nigerian people which they assumed to lack any civilized notions of law and justice. Consequently the so-called 'native' courts in Southern Nigeria and their Islamic counterparts in the Muslim emirates, which had very limited jurisdiction and operated on the basis of pre-colonial customary law (*sharia* law in the case of the *Alkali* courts) were subjected to the rigorous supervision and control of British political officers—district officers and residents—many of whom had no formal training in either British or indigenous law, but nonetheless had almost limitless powers to annul, reverse or modify the decisions of these courts. J.S. Coleman even justified this palpably anomalous situation by asserting that

... the stringency of supervision was not necessarily the result of hunger for power, but rather of a passion to achieve and maintain certain minimum standards of justice and administrative efficiency.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever one may think about the distortion of the indigenous system of law and justice and its subjugation to the whims of the almighty British *raj*, the one undeniable consequence that flowed from it was the authoritarian hold of both the British political officer and the literate African court clerk on the dispensation of justice at the level of local administration. This injection of an inscrutable foreign element into the administration of justice tended to divorce it to a significant extent from the time-honoured traditions of the people. Even though Nigerians have been dragged before these courts or have approached them willingly for one cause or another, the limited extent of their acceptance can be estimated from the failure of the British colonial authorities and their Nigerian successors to stamp out the so-called illegal courts, operating outside the ken of district officers, residents, or divisional advisers, and to which many Nigerians, especially in the rural areas, are happier to appeal for justice.

68. See the chapter by T.N. Tamuno, "British Colonial Administration on the Twentieth Century", (the last section on "Administration of Justice").

69. J.S. Coleman, op. cit., p. 34.

The case of the British-style courts has proved even more anomalous and divergent from the pre-colonial principles of law and justice. The courts operated and still operate on the basis of British common law elaborated in English by officers of the court in possession of this esoteric knowledge. Even when interpreters are used for the benefit of non-English speaking litigants or accused persons, the possibilities of misrepresentation of factual depositions are almost limitless. Add to this the strange array of technical traps and loopholes with regard to evidence and procedure built into this system, and the helplessness of the average Nigerian confronted with it becomes clear. It is for reasons like these that K.A. Busia's comment on the colonial legal systems bequeathed to African politics is particularly apt in the case of Nigeria:

The mystification of the law, (writes Busia) and its divorce from the active daily life of the community, made the legal profession a necessary and lucrative one in Africa. Litigants needed guidance through the maze that the law became to the majority of citizens. This situation has had the effect of altering the essential nature of law as a social institution reflecting societal norms and goals.<sup>70</sup>

Apart from this phenomenon of the "mystification of the law", access to the British-style courts is virtually barred to most Nigerians by a number of factors including the excessively high cost of litigation, the long delay in the disposition of cases, caused by a shortage of judges and magistrates, the labyrinth of bureaucratic processes that have to be complied with for a case to be considered as properly listed before a court and the obstructionism and corruption of some court officials.

One other major problem of British law and justice in Nigeria is that since its establishment, certain forms of conduct, which either did not exist in pre-colonial times or were not considered criminal, came to attract criminal signification and penalties under the British system. For instance, the equivalent of the law of assault and battery in most indigenous Nigerian communities was more flexible than its British counterpart and was generally interpreted to exclude the case of a man meting out instant physical punishment to another caught stealing his property. Furthermore, traffic offences, especially in relation to the driving of motor vehicles and the riding of pedal or motor cycles were unknown in pre-colonial indigenous societies and, given the high rate of illiteracy among those steering such vehicles on our roads and the feeble communication system operating in the country, ignorance of the legal regulations governing these new offences exists on a massive scale. Since it is one of the cardinal principles of British law that "ignorance of the law is no excuse", the average law-abiding citizen has tended to treat the law-enforcement officers, the police, with awe and avoid them for fear of being entrapped by laws he does not know about. Many members of the police force have also tended to take advantage of this situation to intimidate and exploit members of the public who fall into their net. Perhaps the most culpable in this regard are the traffic policemen who are reputed to 'ambush' commercial vehicle drivers on our highways, collect 'tolls' from them routinely and slap all sorts of criminal charges (real and concocted) on those who refuse to comply. It has also been repeatedly established in court proceedings that members of the Criminal Investigation (CID) of the police often treat a suspect or an accused who, by law,

70. K.A. Busia, *The Challenge of Africa* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 75.



should be "presumed innocent until found guilty", with the savagery and disrespect that even a condemned man should not suffer. Consequently, the police force, which theoretically is the custodian of the people's rights and liberties, has acquired such a badly tarnished public image that it seldom gets the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of the public that it so vitally needs to discharge its duties of maintenance of law and order and of crime detection.

It is also well known that in the area of civil law, the British legal and judicial system has progressively distorted the time-tested concepts and practices of our people. Two crucial areas of distortion deserve attention. First, thanks to the compelling example of Lagos, where British individualist ideas regarding property ownership have been operative for over a century, the indigenous concept of communal or family ownership of land has been constantly and progressively assaulted in practice. The permanent alienation of communal or family land (or one's share of it) through sale, which was foreign to most indigenous Nigerian communities, has become increasingly significant during this century, the degree varying with the level of commercial and monetary activity going on in a particular locality.<sup>71</sup> The resultant struggle, within communities and families of factions committed to purist traditional practice and those imbued with the British individualist ethos, coupled with competition among the latter category for optimal financial gain from land transactions, has tended to make disputes over land ownership extremely productive of litigation, especially in southern Nigeria.

The other major area of distortion is that of marriages contracted under British law. This law exists side by side with several pre-colonial marriage laws (Islamic in the emirate societies and among some southern Muslims, and other forms of marriage laws sanctioned by custom). The Marriage Ordinance, recently slightly modified by the Matrimonial Causes Decree of 1970, is informed by European Christian principles of "one man one wife to the exclusion of all others", and the virtual permanence of the union between husband and wife. The first of these principles makes the taking of another wife or husband while the original marriage has not been judicially dissolved a criminal offence punishable by a fine of ₦1,000 or five years imprisonment or both. The second makes divorce a lengthy often ruinous business. However, even though many Western-educated Nigerians, especially among the Christianized elements, subscribe to this kind of foreign marriage, experience has shown that the contracting parties are not always able to observe the first principle. Nevertheless, for reasons of convenience (sometimes considerations of economic security, the welfare of the issues of the marriage, fear of dirty publicity, etc.), the offended party, more often the woman than the man, does not usually initiate divorce proceedings against her husband, but rather settles for co-existence with what amounts to almost complete abandon and impunity.

71. See J.S. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 68. G.B.A. Coker, *Family Property Among the Yorubas* (London and Lagos, 1966) 2nd ed., pp. 34-35; T.O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law and Custom* (London, 1962) 3rd ed. pp. 359-60. R.M. Prothero, "Migratory Labour from North-Western Nigeria" *Africa*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3. p. 253, and S.N.C. Obi, *Ibo Law of Property*, (London 1966) p. 132ff.



**Conclusion**

It seems clear from our analysis that the 20th century has been most marked for Nigeria by the confrontation of African indigenous cultures with a foreign European culture largely through the agency of British military might and political authority. This confrontation resulted in the imposition of certain foreign cultural values on our people, who in turn selected what interested them in the foreigner's way of life to the extent that their options were open. The one major consequence of this meeting of cultures is the high degree of differentiation in acculturation to Western ways among major geographical regions, between urban centres and rural communities and even within a single urban area. On a hypothetical cultural map of Nigeria one would see a complex pattern of shading, from the pure black for the most Anglicized, Christian, urbanized, Oxford-trained professional or bureaucrat addicted to three-piece suits, to the pure white for the illiterate, peasant farmer or fisherman living in one of the remotest Nigerian villages, with many varying shades of grey and black in between.

One inference that can be drawn from this situation is that a predominantly hybrid Nigerian society, which is neither wholly indigenous nor wholly Western, has emerged but in which one's effective participation in the country's political decision-making and in the modern commercial and industrial sectors of the economy is almost in direct proportion to the degree of Westernization one has undergone. The most significant instrument of Westernization in Nigeria during this century has been Western-type literary education, and the most highly educated and politically and economically influential Nigerians today are predominantly first-generation educated people who are, perhaps, justly proud of their achievements.

In the psychology of the political decision-making élite and the Nigerian public at large there is a not unjustifiable correlation between personal material success and national development on the one hand and the provision of adequate and quality educational facilities for the generality of the people on the other. Ironically, in spite of the phenomenal growth in investments in public education during the last twenty years, it would appear as if the educational system is becoming an increasingly closed one in which those who had the initial head-start are creaming off most of the benefits. Some of the contributory factors are special fee-paying nursery-primary schools for élite children who are thereby at an advantage in a situation in which there is a very narrow bottleneck between the primary and secondary school systems; and the high cost of secondary education which is beyond the means of the means of the vast majority of Nigerian working people. Consequently, the country is currently moving along a perilous course which is likely to lead to a sharp dichotomization of the population into the well-schooled, securely employed, well remunerated and high-living Westernized élite and the masses of poor, illiterate or marginally literate, unemployed or marginally employed, low-income Nigerians eking out a precarious and miserable living.

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